

The Origins of the Tiandihui



*The Chinese Triads in
Legend and History*



Dian H. Murray

In collaboration with

Qin Baoqi

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Frontispiece: The Guanyinting, in Gaoxi township, Fujian, where the Tiandihui was founded in the early 1760's. (Courtesy of Robert Antony.)

To my parents, Marian and Loren Hechtner

Preface

This book and my collaboration with Professor Qin Baoqi, of the Qing History Institute of People's University in Beijing, grew out of my visit to the First Historical Archives in 1984. In completing my research on pirates, I was tantalized by fleeting references to their interaction with the Tiandihui, a movement supposedly aimed at ousting the Qing dynasty and restoring the Ming. Yet I was also discomfited by indications that the Tiandihui members I encountered were more actively involved in the struggle for economic survival than in political struggle, and by the fact that my quest for a comprehensive discussion of the society's origins yielded little more than bits and pieces of what I now believe to have been mostly fiction.

As a neophyte scholar laying my plaint before Professor Qin, I was astonished to find that instead of "setting me straight," he affirmed my challenge to the orthodox view of the Tiandihui, and I was more than a little delighted when he concluded our conversation by suggesting that we write a book together.

Our collaboration took place over the summers of 1986–88, when I returned to China as the on-site director of the University of Notre Dame's program in Tianjin. With no time to explore the First Historical Archives myself, our arrangement to work together and the timing were ideal, because Qin Baoqi, as editor-in-chief of a project jointly sponsored by the First Historical Archives and the Qing History Institute, was just then in the process of editing the palace memorials and other documents for publication in the seven-volume collection *Tiandihui*. As a result, he was able to place their contents at my disposal before the last of the published volumes appeared.

Our collaboration has yielded two very different books: Qin's own *Qing qianqi Tiandihui yanjiu* (Studies of the early Qing Tiandihui), published in 1988, and the account presented below. It had been my intention to return to China in the summer of 1989, for a final session with Professor Qin. Unfortunately, the crushing of the "pro-democracy" movement made such a session impossible and necessitated that I complete the manuscript on this side of the Pacific, in South Bend, Indiana. I am particularly indebted to Professor Qin for his contribution to my way of thinking in Chapters One, Two, and Four.

The reign periods and abbreviations of the Qing emperors mentioned in the text are:

Shunzhi (SZ)	1644—1661
Kangxi (KX)	1662—1722
Yongzheng (YZ)	1723—1735
Qianlong (QL)	1736—1795
Jiaqing (JQ)	1796—1820
Daoguang (DG)	1821—1850
Xianfeng (XF)	1851—1861
Tongzhi (TZ)	1862—1874
Guangxu (GX)	1875—1908

Pinyin romanization is used throughout except for quoted material from English-language sources and published Chinese authors whose names have been rendered in the Wade-Giles system.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge those who have assisted in the completion of this project. First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to the International Studies Program at the University of Notre Dame and its director, Dr. Isabel Charles. Appointment to the Tianjin post for three successive summers made my collaboration with Professor Qin Baoqi possible.

Zhuang Jifa of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Cai Shaoqing of Nanking University, and David Ownby of Southern Methodist University generously imparted to me their considerable knowledge of secret societies and the Tiandihui. I have also benefited from consultation with Robert Antony, Carl Trocki, Jean DeBernardi, David Faure, Leonard Blussé, Barend J. ter Haar, Zhao Fusan, Winston Hsieh, Chang Pin-tsun, and Susan Naquin, as well as feedback from lectures given at Cornell University and the University of Michigan in April 1991. Mia Wang and Lan Feng have rendered invaluable assistance with Chinese translations and calligraphy. The manuscript has also benefited from faithful and critical reading by David Ownby at every stage of the way.

Bibliographical assistance from the staffs of the National Central Library and the Academia Sinica in Taipei, the British Library and the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, the Yenching Library at Harvard University, and the interlibrary loan division of the University of Notre Dame made it possible to locate many of the items in the Tiandihui Bibliography. To this end, Linda Gregory has exerted superhuman effort in the search for obscure periodicals.

The Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts at the University of Notre Dame provided generous financial support. A Travel and Research Grant during the summer of 1986 underwrote travel to both the Chinese mainland and Taiwan; a Junior Faculty Fellowship (and a leave from the University) enabled me to extend my residence in China from August until October 1987. Travel grants from the Joint Committee on Chinese Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council, and the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts made possible my participation in the Second Symposium on Chinese Secret Societies (*huidang*) in Shanghai in October 1988.

I am also grateful to the publication team of Stanford University Press and especially to Barbara Mnookin, whose painstaking efforts as an editor have created a book far more accurate and readable than the original manuscript.

Finally, thanks are owing to the members of my family, who for half a decade have generously let my desire to complete this project take precedence over filial duties, responsibilities, and pleasures.

D.H.M.

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Places of known Tiandihui activity in mainland China before the Opium War



Fujian Province

1. Pucheng
2. Chongan
3. Guangze
4. Jianning
5. Shaowu
6. Jianyang
7. Dalikou
8. Shunchang
9. Huangdun
10. Nanping
11. Shaxian
12. Ninghua
13. Xiapu
14. Changting
15. Wuping
16. Shanghang
17. Yongding
18. Yongan
19. Fuzhou
20. Xianyou
21. Quanzhou
22. Tongan
23. Zhangzhou
24. Pinghe
25. Zhaoan
26. Yunxiao

Guangdong Province

27. Chaoan

28. Pingyuan
29. Shicheng
30. Raoping (Huanggang)
31. Heping (Yangming)
32. Longquan (Laolong)
33. Lianping
34. Boluo
35. Chujiang (Maba)
36. Nanxiong
37. Xinzuoatong
38. Lianxian
39. Jiulian Shan (Mountain)
40. Yongan
41. Guishan

Jiangxi Province

42. Nanfeng
43. Shicheng
44. Ruijin
45. Guiqi
46. Huichang
47. Anyuan
48. Dingnan
49. Longnan
50. Jiulianshan
51. Ganzhou
52. Xingguo
53. Shangyou
54. Yongxin
55. Jian

Guangxi Province

56. Guanyang
57. Gongcheng
58. Pingluo
59. Pingnan
60. Laibin
61. Shanglin
62. Yishan
63. Wuzhou
64. Teng
65. Yulin
66. Rong
67. Cenqi

Guizhou Province

68. Xingyi
69. Liping
(also co. seat of Kaitai)

Yunnan Province

70. Shizong
71. Wenshan
72. Baoning

Hunan Province

73. Jianghua
74. Dao

Introduction

One of the most exciting developments for historians of China during the last twenty years has been the opening of archives on both Taiwan and the Chinese mainland rich in materials on the economy and society of the late imperial period.¹ Among the newly revealed panoramas of daily life, scholars have been afforded precious glimpses of the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century sojourners—migrants, peddlers, and religious travelers—who were instrumental in founding and spreading the Heaven and Earth Society, or Tiandihui.

These materials suggest that the Tiandihui emerged as a mutual aid fraternity in response to the demographic and economic crises of the late eighteenth century, and that it was but one of several societies, or *hui*, to appear at this time. (Since “hui” has no precise English equivalent, the terms “society” and “association” employed here should be regarded as only rough approximations.)

During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), hui were organizations characterized by a ceremonial ritual, often in the form of a blood oath, that brought people together for a common goal. Some were organized for clandestine, criminal, or even seditious purposes by people who were alienated from or at the margins of society. Others were organized for mutual protection or the administration of local activities by members of law-abiding communities. Hui members originally organized for one purpose sometimes found themselves mobilized for different ends, and simultaneously involved in activities where the distinctions between “legal” and “illegal,” “protection” and “predation,” or “orthodox” and “heterodox” blurred. However, all these groups, regardless of their specific configurations, fell well within the long organizational and cultural traditions of China.²

One of the most vexing problems for scholars working with Chinese societies of either a religious or a secular nature is tracking them through time and space. The Tiandihui, in particular, has long been a subject of heated debate. Scholars have argued among themselves for decades about which hui, and sometimes even which religious sects (*jiao*), were bona fide members of the Tiandihui family. Although it was generally agreed that the organizations called the Tiandihui, the Three Dots Society (Sandianhui), the Three Unities Society (Sanhehui), the Hong League (Hongmen), and the Triads were one and the same, it was impossible to verify the point.

Now, however, with the opening of Qing dynasty archives, and specifically, with access to the palace memorial collections in the First Historical Archives in Beijing and the National Museum in Taipei,³ we are able to determine the circumstances under which the Tiandihui emerged in Zhangzhou prefecture, Fujian, as well as the ways in which it spread throughout China in the period before the Opium War (1839–42) and thereafter to such distant places as Southeast Asia and the United States. These memorials, as we will see in the first two chapters of this study, reveal the Tiandihui as a multisurname fraternity that was transmitted throughout South China by an emigrant society.

The new archival sources, valuable as they are, are not problem-free. For much as they seem to tell us about the Tiandihui and its origins, there is much that is left unsaid. What is stated must be constantly called into question, for the perspective is inevitably that of government officials who perceived the society as a threat to stable, well-ordered communities, and their own duty as weeding out such “illegal” organizations.

Of primary concern is the overall reliability of information based primarily on the confessions of people apprehended for their alleged involvement with the Tiandihui. In some cases, these confessions were obtained years, or even decades, after the fact, and thus are subject to the foibles of human memory. In other cases, they were obtained under torture. Ankle presses and thumbscrews were used in the hope that the accused would reveal information they might have wished to conceal. The danger, of course, was that under excruciating pain, even the innocent would sometimes attest to the crimes with which they were charged or at the very least repeat hearsay about matters of which they had no real knowledge.⁴

After being sworn to, the depositions in a given case were usually forwarded to the emperor, along with other relevant documentation. Some of this testimony is still extant and may be read in its original form.⁵ But for the confessions that have not survived, we are again dependent on the lenses through which Qing officials viewed the Tiandihui and the ways in which provincial governors and governors-general summarized their contents for the emperor.⁶ Under these circumstances, one question to bear always in mind is the extent to which the information recounted in the palace memorials reflects reality. Should we take the almost verbatim descriptions of Tiandihui rituals and founding purposes in a series of documents as an accurate depiction of the situation or merely as the product of administrative tidiness?

In any event, one thing is clear: the view of the Tiandihui as a mutual aid society that emerges from archival documents stands in marked contrast to the view that has prevailed throughout much of the twentieth century, to wit, that it was created by Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) or other “loyalists” of the seventeenth century for the purpose of “overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming.”⁷ Histories that espouse Ming Loyalty as the *raison d’être* of the Tiandihui tend to be based on internally generated sources and, in particular, on its creation myth, the “Xi Lu Legend.”

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, society materials in the form of manuals, registers, and insignia, unearthed in both China and Southeast Asia, gave rise to lively disputes among “Ming Loyalist” scholars about the meaning of the legend and the historical counterparts of its fictional characters. These hypotheses are now being challenged by scholars of the “Mutual Aid” school.

Recent criticism notwithstanding, Ming Loyalist views not only continue to figure large in the popular perception of the Tiandihui in China today, but still have passionate adherents within some Chinese academic and political circles as well. Moreover, these views continue to be cited for either commendation or refutation in nearly every contemporary article written about the Tiandihui. One simply cannot proceed very far in the secondary literature without encountering aspects of them.

To complicate matters, the Chinese have hardly contended alone in their speculations about the origins of the Tiandihui. In fact, Westerners, past and present, have advanced their own, very different theories. Europeans of the nineteenth century, imbued with a consciousness of fraternal orders and clandestine organizations, regarded the Tiandihui as a Chinese “secret society” and preoccupied themselves with discussions of whether it shared a common origin with the Freemasons and other European mystery cults.

Curiously, considering the length and ferocity of this debate, there has been no English-language source to which scholars could readily turn for a systematic recapitulation of the various hypotheses, many of which have appeared in obscure publications. Accordingly, a central purpose of this book is to bring together as much of what has been said about the Tiandihui as possible. Chapters Three and Four are devoted, respectively, to summaries of the historiographical literature produced by Western and Chinese scholars. In addition, we have prepared a list of every work we could find on the society’s early history. That “Tiandihui Bibliography” appears at the end of the book, following the Notes.

So far seven versions of the Xi Lu Legend have been discovered in China. Because of its importance to the theories of the Ming Loyalist scholars and its impact on Tiandihui historiography as a whole, the final chapter is devoted to a discussion of the legend as the product of later, as opposed to founding, generations of Tiandihui members and a tale with an evolutionary history of its own. The seven versions of the Xi Lu Legend itself appear in English translation in Appendix B.

Beginnings: The Eighteenth Century

The Tiandihui, as we know it today, was founded at the Guanyinting (Goddess of Mercy pavilion), Gaoxi township, in Zhangpu county, Zhangzhou prefecture, Fujian province, sometime in 1761 or 1762.¹ It was a most ordinary product of a most extraordinary environment, merely one of several similar societies to emerge in the Minnan-Yuedong heart of the Nanyang trade zone.

The area where it sprang up, also referred to by some Western scholars as the Southeast Coast macroregion, encompassed portions of southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong (plus Taiwan). Comprising approximately 47,224 square miles, even the mainland parts were set off from the rest of China by high mountain regions and internally divided by their own peaks and streams. Separate river systems washed the narrow plains of the region's major prefectures, while rugged terrain divided the settlements into highlands and lowlands, Hakka and Hokkien.²

The Physical and Economic Environment of Zhangzhou Prefecture

Zhangzhou, the southernmost of Fujian's four coastal prefectures, lies in the heart of the province's largest plain, created by the Qiulong (Nine Dragons) River and its tributaries. Aptly described by the Qing scholar Gu Yanwu as an area "leaning on the mountains and resting in the sea, right between Fukien and Kuangtung,"³ it was composed in the period of our concern of the seven counties (*xian*) of Longqi, Zhangpu, Haicheng, Nanjing, Changtai, Pinghe, and Zhaoan. Its capital, Zhangzhoufu, sat upstream some 24 miles west of Xiamen (Amoy).

To some, the prefecture appeared as a paradise on earth, a "charming, thriving and well-populated country, rich in corn, rice and sugar cane."⁴ Others were less enchanted, pronouncing its air "damp and vaporous," and its soil "full of snakes and worms."⁵

But it was not agriculture that drove the Zhangzhou economy. Its maritime location had given rise to a highly commercialized, outwardlooking, trade that had made the area an "exception" to the rest of the province and most of China as early as the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).⁶ As Evelyn Rawski notes in her study of coastal Fujian, the peasants of the interior had begun to specialize in cash crops and to be heavily dependent on market conditions at an early date.⁷ Throughout the Ming, foreign silver flowed into Zhangzhou, and its economy boomed, supported by such important manufactures as silk and cotton textiles, iron cooking pots, fans, and salt.

The downside of this commercial prosperity, however, was an inflationary cycle that pushed land prices in Zhangzhou to levels not found elsewhere in Fujian, and that even in the Ming probably made it difficult for peasants to purchase good paddy.⁸ The result was an out-migration by the dispossessed that, as early as 1600, caused one-half of the Fujianese to earn their livings away from home.⁹

Conditions seem to have worsened during the Qing, when the "momentum of agricultural commercialization between 1600 and 1800 stopped short of transforming Fukien's [Fujian's] traditional agrarian economy into a commercial economy based on cash crops."¹⁰ Despite rising rice output, made possible by improved seeds, double-cropping, and terracing, and the opening of marginal lands with the introduction of such crops as peanuts and sweet potatoes, the final result was even greater population growth, declining man-land ratios, over-intensive farming, and the complex systems of multiple ownership and tenancy so eloquently described elsewhere.¹¹

To give some indication of the magnitude of the problem, in 1751 Fujian province had an estimated 7,736,155 inhabitants, about 1,500,000 of whom lived in the two largest prefectures, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou. The succeeding years saw a population explosion that pushed the late-eighteenth- or early-nineteenth-century figure beyond even the 1953 census's estimate of 13.1 million. In terms of land tenure, this meant that whereas in 1571, the average landholding in Zhangzhou was estimated at 5.0 *mu* per person

(6.6 mu = 1 acre), by 1812 the figure had shrunk to 0.93, well below the 4.0 mu needed for bare subsistence.¹²

One of the regions hardest hit by this cycle of fast population growth, land scarcity, and high rice prices was Zhangpu county, the home of the Tiandihui. Even more than the rest of Fujian, Zhangpu, hemmed in by mountains and sea, was a region for which the phrase “the land is barren and the people are poor” (*diji minpin*) seemed an apt description: its hillsides were hard and infertile, and its fields, mostly located near the sea, were about 50 percent sand and brine. Despite the unprecedented prosperity of the Ming, in which the number of Zhangpu markets increased ninefold, from just one in 1491 to ten by 1628,¹³ the harsh natural environment made for a population that engaged in constant battles with the sea. By 1425, inhabitants from Longqi and Zhangpu counties had already built 186 dikes to reclaim land from the sea.¹⁴ Their difficulties were exacerbated during the Qing by rising absentee landlordism, which gave rise to the complex tenancy system known as the “one plot of land, two or three owners” (*yitian liangsan zhu*) and to large numbers of landless farmers. In addition, the region boasted a large number of salt fields and salt producers who, with no dependable means of livelihood, were at the mercy of rapacious officials and merchants.¹⁵

Some of those who did not have access to land sought employment as hired laborers in their native villages. Others, with some degree of literacy, got by telling fortunes, reading horoscopes, or predicting the future from sticks shaken out of a can. Still others who knew the martial arts sold their skills on the streets or took on students. Many of those without such recourses found their niches as priests, beggars, pirates, or thieves.

But more often than not, circumstances forced the dispossessed to follow in the footsteps of their forebears and earn their living abroad. Some took up peddling, setting up small stalls in nearby country towns or migrating back and forth between villages with carrying poles balanced on their shoulders. Others were pushed out of their familiar confines while still remaining relatively close to home, engaging in the long-distance trade between Guangzhou and Xiamen, not far from Zhangzhou. But many had to go much farther afield, to Guangxi, Sichuan, the Nanyang, and especially Taiwan. That island, as many scholars have pointed out, provided a safety valve for the overflow of mainlanders during much of the early and mid-Qing. When Kangxi came to the throne (1662), Taiwan’s population had not yet reached 100,000; by the end of his reign (1722), migrants from Guangdong and Fujian had swelled the figure to more than 200,000. And this was only the beginning of the growth. Over the next hundred years, Taiwan continued to fill up rapidly, to the point where its population soared to perhaps as much as 2,000,000 in the Jiaqing period.¹⁶ In addition, the rapid pace of Taiwan’s economic development after its conquest by the Qing in 1683 was due primarily to immigrants from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, who made the island an integral part of the Nanyang trading network.¹⁷

Individual sojourners, regardless of whether they were itinerant peddlers or small-scale participants in the long-distance commerce of the day, shared in common an insecure livelihood. Cut off from local support systems, they were socially isolated with little recourse but to make do among themselves. Coastal Fujian, like coastal Guangdong, was an area with a long tradition of the “down-and-out” making fast money at the expense of others wherever they could; many of the hard-pressed joined with those habitually at the financial margins, resorting to part-time petty piracy and crime to make ends meet. J. J. M. de Groot, during his peregrinations through coastal Fujian in the 1880’s, observed that everytime the livelihood of the people of Zhangzhou was threatened, fishermen and farmers alike would move with their families into boats, where they bided their time eking out livings as fishermen or pirates until they could return to their homes.¹⁸ That this was but the most recent manifestation of a centuries-old cycle was borne out by a local saying to the effect that whenever people in Zhangzhou or Quanzhou got hungry, pirates emerged.¹⁹

The Social and Political Environment of Zhangzhou

Oriented toward the sea and cut off from its neighbors, Fujian was always a difficult province to govern, and the Zhangzhou region in particular was often characterized as being “*Hua wai*,” outside of civilization.²⁰ Continuous turmoil, recurrent cycles of rebellion, and closure to the outside characterized its political scene.

One telling example was the *wokou* episode of the mid-sixteenth century, in which bands of Sino-Japanese smuggler-pirates repeatedly raided the coast from the Yangtze delta to Vietnam. For Fujian, the worst period came between 1555 and 1564, when *wokou* raids laid waste coastal ports while brigands pillaged the mountainous interior. The residents in their plight thereupon turned to lineages for self-preservation, starting them down the evolutionary road, as Harry Lamley has noted, to becoming the strong

corporate entities that ultimately came to dominate much of southeastern China.²¹

Zhangzhou was also a major arena in the Manchu struggle for South China and the coast. Of the many regional contests during the Ming–Qing transition, probably none had more dramatic repercussions than that centering on the Zheng family in Fujian. The details of Zheng Zhilong’s rise to power as a maritime adventurer with an enormous fleet of his own, his subsequent surrender to both the Ming and the Qing government, and the anti-Qing resistance carried out by his son Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), who ended up on Taiwan, have been told elsewhere and need not detain us here except insofar as they relate to the sufferings of Zhangzhou.²² In the words of a contemporary:

Chih-lung was a man from Ch’üan-chou. He invaded Chang-chou but spared Ch’üan-chou. Therefore the Chang-chou people insisted on pursuing him, while the Ch’üan-chou people insisted on placating him. Both prefectural governments held to their own opinion without reaching a common decision, and the piracy became even more furious.²³

Between 1620 and 1683, one of most hotly contested pieces of territory in this struggle was Xiamen (Amoy), which changed hands several times and served as a major base of Zheng operations. Given Xiamen’s location at the mouth of Zhangzhou’s river basin, the turmoil there easily spilled over into the prefecture itself. In 1628, for example, Zheng Zhilong, frustrated in his attempts to gain pardon from authorities in Amoy, seized twenty merchant junks and plundered numerous settlements on the Zhangzhou shore of the Amoy estuary while taking care all the while not to damage the property of people from Quanzhou.²⁴

As if the depredations of the Zheng family were not enough, more suffering came to Zhangzhou as a result of the coastal evacuation (*haijin*) policy implemented by the Qing government between 1660 and 1683. In an attempt to starve out the Zhengs, Qing officials ordered the entire coastal population to move thirty, fifty, or sometimes even several hundred li to the interior (one li = 0.5 km). The region near Amoy was the first to be evacuated; the policy was then extended to the remainder of the coast the next year, 1661. By 1665, most of the southern coast had been forcibly depopulated. The result was incalculable damage to local residents. In the words of a contemporary:

Villages, farms, fields, and houses, all is burnt and left behind.... The people, being without any means of livelihood, wander about and their dead are counted by the millions. Everything within two or three hundred li from the coast is left waste, creating a veritable no-man’s land.²⁵

Local leaders took advantage of all this turmoil to establish their own networks, territories, and spheres of influence.²⁶ *Xiedou*, collective violence triggered by local feuding, was the result. The feuds, which came in time to characterize so much of southeastern China, occurred first among the lineages of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou and were a direct result of the twenty-year coastal evacuation policy. As the littoral was resettled, disputes among the inhabitants broke out over property boundaries and tideland rights, and later, during the Yongzheng reign (1725–35), turned into well-organized fights.²⁷

Xiedou outbreaks were first noted in Tongan county during the 1720’s, with the report that, after having been preyed on by larger rivals, several small lineages banded together to form a “pseudo-lineage” for their mutual protection.²⁸ Thereafter, “violence carried out between balanced groups in the absence of effective state control”²⁹ produced cycles of bloody give-and-take among lineages that sometimes continued for generations and often involved ritual practices. Owing to the coastal inhabitants’ need to defend themselves from pirates, weapons abounded, and armed struggle became pervasive—especially in the Quanzhou region, where the big lineages continually provoked the small ones.³⁰

Describing this process, the scholar Zhuang Jifa has written that, after mixing blood and wine and swearing their fidelity under Heaven and Earth, men of different surnames banded together and adopted “shi,” the first character of the Chinese term for Buddha, or some other character as a common surname. This enabled them to form a major “lineage group” while at the same time sweeping away the kind of conflicts usually implied by different surnames.³¹

Nearly everyone who has written about the Minnan-Yuedong region has mentioned feuds as one of the major problems of governance and commented on the proclivity of people from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou to become involved. As early as 1728, Gao Qizhuo, the governor-general of Fujian, complained, “The vilest custom in Fujian is that of large surname groups gathering together to *xiedou*,” the worst examples being

the two prefectures of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, where “the great lineages [*dazu*] prey on one another constantly.”³²

The situation was no better a century later, according to Xie Jinluan, a prominent literatus of the early nineteenth century:

In ... Tongan [county], Quanzhou [prefecture], and Zhangpu [county], Zhangzhou [prefecture], the lines of enmity have been drawn for many years. Grudges over murdered fathers and elder brothers are everywhere.... There is not one feud-free county in Quanzhou or Zhangzhou, nor is there one feud-free year.³³

Xie Jinluan's contemporary Yao Ying observed that in Pinghe county (Zhangzhou) alone there were no fewer than 1,000 cases on record, most of which involved homicide committed during robbery, feuds, and abductions. He also pointed out that in Zhangzhou it was the custom to make clear distinctions between the large and small, and strong and weak lineages, in a region where the small and weak had been serving the large and strong for a long time.³⁴ In short, the blood feuds of Zhangzhou were carried out by common-surname alliances scattered through several rural districts, which during times of crisis could be mobilized into large “assembled lineages” (*huizu*).

The *xiedou* activities of the early eighteenth century featured pitched battles in which combatants faced each other with iron-tipped carrying poles, “the most common lethal weapon then employed.”³⁵ But by the end of the century, modern firearms had come into wide use, escalating the scale of combat appreciably. The composition of the combatants had changed as well, with non-kin mercenaries or drifters increasingly hired to participate in lineage feuds. Many who participated in the feuding mechanism were men who had been pushed aside by the demographic and ecological changes. Some such as Zhang Biao and Xie Zhi, whose stories are told below, eventually joined the *Tiandihui*.

Xiedou techniques and patterns of organization spread outward from Zhangzhou as people were forced to migrate across the border to places like Chaozhou and Huizhou prefectures in Guangdong or to move from the Hokkien lowlands to the Hakka highlands of the Tingzhou (Fujian) and Jiaying (Guangdong) hinterlands. Nowhere did the practice catch on more strongly, however, than in Taiwan, with the important difference that, unlike the surname or lineage feuds of the continent, the feuds there were carried on by residents of a county or prefecture against “outsiders.” The most famous of these “native place” or “subethnic” feuds pitted people from Zhangzhou against people from Quanzhou, and people from Fujian against people from Guangdong (or people from both Guangdong and Quanzhou against people from Zhangzhou). These patterns, which developed at the time of the Zhu Yigui rebellion (1721), often amounted to feuds between the Hokkien and the Hakka.

Local religious societies (*shenminghui*), organized for the support of local deities or ancestor worship, often financed these feuds and allowed their temples to be used as the headquarters for feud operations. According to Lamley, some of these societies, although ostensibly founded for the support of certain local deities, really provided a network of non-kin connections to frontier communities lacking extensive agnatic ties.³⁶

The Sworn Brotherhoods of the Early Qing

The lineage system faced a certain competition from the self-help associations formed by “people with different surnames,” a practice that was deeply embedded in popular culture and was spread throughout society by storytellers who recounted well-known tales from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) and *Outlaws of the Marsh* (or *Water Margin*; *Shuihuzhuan*). Two episodes in particular—the tale of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, the heroes of *Romance*, taking an oath of brotherhood in the Peach Garden, and the tale of the 108 bandits of *Outlaws* organizing into a brotherhood of different surnames to experience together the good times and the bad—inspired scores of small-scale popular associations of the *jiebai xiongdi*, or sworn brotherhood, type.³⁷ As men formed brotherhoods for purposes of *xiedou*, they often solidified their ties by drinking a mixture of blood and wine and took their oaths kneeling before statues or pictures of their holy patron.³⁸

Likewise, when peasants displaced from their villages banded together for mutual aid, brotherhoods of different surnames constituted the organizational means most directly at their disposal. It was from within this social milieu that the *Tiandihui* emerged, and its creation was not, as Ming Loyalist scholars have argued, a chance or isolated event.

By way of background, it is possible to speak of the overall development of sworn brotherhoods and secret societies during the Qing dynasty as having fallen into several phases. At first, before 1683, in the years of the Ming-Qing transition, societies consisted almost entirely of sworn brotherhoods (*jiebai xiongdì* or *jieshe baimeng*) of either the “non-blood oath” or the “blood oath” type. During this period, the Qing government was not yet well established, and the Manchus, still fighting to unify the country, had not really begun to consolidate their rule or firmly entrench themselves within the society. As a result, most of the resistance took the form of open armed struggle. Though secret societies did not play much of a role at this stage, sworn brotherhoods were used to some extent by both elites and nonelites as vehicles through which to wage struggles for economic survival or political resistance, or both.³⁹

Yet, small scale as this activity was, it was perceived as a serious threat by Qing officials, who took measures to stamp it out. From the relevant sections of the *Da-Qing huidian*, we know that the authorities were troubled enough by the existence of at least a few associations formed by people of different surnames who had “smeared their blood” and sworn oaths of loyalty to pass a regulation in 1646, prescribing a 100-stroke flogging for merely participating in such organizations. By 1661, participation in blood-oath brotherhoods (*shaxue mengshi*) under certain circumstances was regarded as a capital offense.⁴⁰

Attitudes toward sworn brotherhoods continued to harden in the Kangxi era as these regulations took on the force of law and began appearing as statutes in the legal codes. Here what determined the seriousness of the offense was the taking of a blood oath. People who had merely sworn brotherhood were to be punished with 100 strokes of the heavy bamboo; those who had sealed their pact by blood were to receive a sentence of capital punishment, to be reviewed at the autumn assizes.⁴¹

One locus of early activity was Taiwan, where the prevalence of sworn brotherhoods was noted by Ji Qiguang, magistrate of Zhuluo county, as early as 1683:

In recent years, it has become an evil custom for two or three young no-goods, looking for trouble and striving to stand out, ... to burn incense and pour out libations, and call one another brother [*chengge hudi*], seeking to forget differences of nobility and baseness and to aid one another in poverty and wealth. [They pledge to] remain together in sadness and in joy, and to watch out for one another in life and in death. Of course, this is not the result. In fact, with one word of disagreement, they turn on one another and kill out of vengeance.⁴²

Little did Ji Qiguang know that the “evil custom” had barely taken hold.

A new phase began after the Qing had completed their territorial conquest in 1683, when opponents of the new government, now driven underground, combined the techniques of sworn fraternity and rebellion to continue their resistance.⁴³ Society formation flourished as these rebels began to base pro-Ming uprisings on foundations of blood brotherhood.⁴⁴

As early as 1696, for example, grievances against local authorities caused Wu Qiu to form a brotherhood, establish Zhu Longyou as a scion of the Ming dynasty, and strike out against the Qing in Zhuluo (Jiayi) county, Taiwan, for the avowed purpose of restoring the Ming.⁴⁵ History repeated itself a few years later when Liu Que, a local tax collector and bursar, became the “elder brother” of a self-protection group that mixed its blood and rose up in two unsuccessful coups in Zhuluo county, on January 4, 1702, and April 1703.⁴⁶ But of all the early uprisings in Taiwan, by far the most serious occurred in 1721. Capitalizing on his surname, Zhu Yigui, a native of Changtai county, Zhangzhou prefecture, labeled himself a scion of the “Zhu Ming,” manufactured banners advocating a revival of the “Great Ming,” and organized a body of followers in Fengshan (Gaoxiong). His followers “rose up” on May 14 and managed to hold most of Taiwan for a short time. Zhu Yigui called himself Yiwang (Righteous King), took Da Ming (Great Ming) as his *guohao* (country name), and adopted the reign title Yonghe (Eternal Peace).⁴⁷

The sworn brotherhoods of the Kangxi era can be said to have represented the first phase in the development of Chinese secret societies, but we must keep in mind that they represented rudimentary gatherings of small numbers of people. Even though the groups sometimes served as the vehicles for rebellion, their uprisings seldom amounted to more than a brief outburst. They had little in the way of structure and did not even have names so far as the members were concerned.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the activities of these early associations contributed directly to the *xiedou* that came to permeate the region during the Yongzheng era. For, as Harry Lamley has pointed out, the Hokkien-Hakka feud patterns that became so widespread in Taiwan developed at the time of the Zhu Yigui rebellion, when Hakka assistance enabled Qing authorities to quell the Hokkien-inspired uprising.⁴⁹

During the Yongzheng era, brotherhoods gave way to societies known as hui. As small lineages banned together to defend themselves from exploitation by larger ones and the nationalist conflicts of the Ming-Qing transition were superseded by the economic and social crises of the high Qing, societies formed for the purpose of mutual aid. Though now clearly outlawed, they became formal enough to acquire names.⁵⁰

An early example was the Father-Mother Society (Fumuhui), which emerged in Zhuluo county in 1728. There were two groups by this name, one under Tang Wan, with twenty-three members, and one under Cai Yin, with twenty-one, but whether the two were branches of one society and linked is unclear. At any rate, it does appear that their purpose was as the name suggests. Each member of Tang Wan's company, at least, reportedly paid one ounce of silver to help defray the costs of caring for elderly parents. The offense that brought about their arrest was that they had also sworn a blood oath, which was sealed by drinking a mixture of blood and wine, and selected the founder, Tang Wan, as their "elder brother."⁵¹

In 1730, Li Cai, originally a soldier in the government maritime service, followed suit, forming the One Piece of Money Association (Yiqianhui) in Amoy. This society, which grew out of a brotherhood that Li had formed to carry on local xiedou activities on the mainland, may well be the first named society to appear outside of Taiwan. It formally came into being on November 24, 1730 (YZ 8/10/15) when more than thirty people gathered at Xiamen's Gulang Islet with the intention of robbing the sea defense (*haifang ting*) yamen. Though members initially paid an ounce of silver for the manufacture and purchase of weapons, the "one piece" in the group's name referred to the additional ounce they promised to contribute whenever a fellow member needed help.⁵²

In 1731, another Mother-Father Society (with no overt connection to the 1728 groups) was formed in Raoping county, Chaozhou prefecture, Guangdong. The leader was a dismissed military *juren*, Yu Mao, who after having been arrested for stealing cattle, had joined with a friend from across the border in Zhaoan county, Fujian, to seek revenge. On October 2, 1731, Yu Mao and fourteen others met at a place in Hanyang county to swear a blood oath. Their goal was, first and foremost, to join with a gang of mercenaries in an attack on the prefectural city of Chaozhou. This scheme was thwarted on the eve of the attack when word leaked out, and the participants were immediately arrested. But members of this Father-Mother Society were also required to pay an ounce of silver to help defray the expense of caring for or burying aged parents.⁵³

Secret societies continued to crop up in the late Yongzheng and early Qianlong periods. In 1735, an Iron Ruler Society (Tiechihui) emerged in Ninghua county, Fujian. In 1742, Small Knife (Xiaodaohui) and Son of the Dragon (Zilonghui) societies were uncovered in Zhangpu, Zhaoan, and Pinghe counties, Zhangzhou.⁵⁴ And in 1752, another Iron Ruler Society staged an uprising in southwestern Shaowu county, Tingzhou prefecture, Fujian.⁵⁵

Even so, the process must have been slow because only fifteen or sixteen named societies actually appear in archival records before 1755.⁵⁶ Interestingly enough, Ming Restorationism was not mentioned in connection with a single one of them. As a result, we can conclude that the named societies (hui) of the Yongzheng and early Qianlong eras were not characterized by political ideology in the way that the sworn brotherhoods of the Kangxi period were.

The Birth and Spread of the Tiandihui

Despite the activity of the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and early Qianlong periods, the real take-off point of society development occurred after 1755. During the second third of the Qianlong reign, societies, like mushrooms, sprang up all over. From archival records alone, we know that at least 199 took shape during the ensuing century. The Heaven and Earth Society, dating from 1761, was thus but one of a host of groups.⁵⁷ In most cases, mutual aid, not politics, constituted their *raison d'être*. It also appears from the archives that what I shall routinely call the Tiandihui, though that name may have come later, was formed in two stages: a period of preparation and proto-development in Sichuan and Guangdong provinces in the years before 1761; and the actual creation that year of a named society in Fujian whose existence can be traced in an unbroken line down to this day.

Before we get into the details of this process, it is important to recall that by the end of the Yongzheng and the beginning of the Qianlong, population pressure in Huguang, Fujian, and Guangdong had produced significant out-migration to places where "people were few and land was plentiful," and that as early as 1743, the Guoluohui, a prototype of the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society), seems to have already been created by immigrants to Sichuan province.⁵⁸ In keeping with this trend, sometime before 1761, the men who would be instrumental in the founding of the Tiandihui, notably Li Amin (a boxing master who was also known as Li Shaomin), Zhu Dingyuan, Tao Yuan, and Ti Xi, left their homes in Zhangpu county to seek

their fortunes in Sichuan. There, Ti Xi and his companions appear to have joined Ma Jiulong, leader of a band of forty-eight monks who specialized in the practice of magic arts and the expulsion of ghosts. Eventually, Ma Jiulong and several of his monks died, and by the time the band decided to leave Sichuan and transmit their techniques in other areas, its numbers had thinned to thirteen. Among the survivors were Li Amin, who returned to Zhangpu county, and Ti Xi, the man most closely associated with the actual founding of the Tiandihui, who went to Guangdong. Ti Xi, whose real name was Zheng Kai, was known by a variety of other aliases, including Monk Wan, Monk Hong Er, and Tu Xi.⁵⁹

Not much is known about Ti Xi, who died in 1779, before his activities had come to the attention of Qing officials. What information we have is thus all second-hand. While in Guangdong, he seems to have recruited a body of forty or fifty followers in Huizhou prefecture, but it is not clear whether the group used the name Tiandihui or indeed any name at all at this time.⁶⁰ After a brief sojourn in Guangdong, Ti Xi seems to have returned in 1761 or 1762 to his native Gaoxi village in Fujian and taken up residence at the Guanyinting. Influenced by a milieu in which societies were emerging all over, Ti Xi now transformed his company into a society (hui). Similar at the outset to the others of its milieu, Ti Xi's creation would come in time to transcend all of them in magnitude, complexity, and longevity.

In the next five years, the Tiandihui spread outward throughout Zhangpu and Pinghe counties.⁶¹ In 1762, Ti Xi, who was certainly then in residence at the Guanyinting, had recruited three Zhangpu men who would become important Tiandihui leaders in their own right: Lu Mao, from Duxun township; Fang Quan, from Gaoxilou village;⁶² and Li Amin, the boxing master from Xiaceng village, who seems to have renewed his affiliation with the organization. The three men went to the Guanyinting and joined together in acknowledging Ti Xi as their teacher (*bai Ti Xi weishi*). In doing so, they became the first generation of Tiandihui "brothers."

Shortly thereafter, in late 1762 or early 1763, Fang Quan recruited Chen Biao, an itinerant doctor, originally from Huizhou, Guangdong, who practiced his arts in Zhangzhou prefecture.⁶³ Chen Biao, in turn, recruited Zhao Song, from inside the North Gate of Yunxiao city. Sometime in 1763, Zhao Song acknowledged Chen Biao as his teacher and joined the Tiandihui. Thereupon, Chen Biao took him to the Guanyinting to pay his respects to Ti Xi, who during the course of their encounter instructed Zhao Song to change his name to Zhao Mingde.

In the next several years, other new members, including Zhang Pu, Xu Yan, Chen Li, and He Zhe were quietly drawn into the group, but the big recruiting push seems to have come in 1767, as Lu Mao laid plans for what would become the first Tiandihui uprising. The process began in the eighth lunar month, when the newcomer He Zhe introduced Lu Mao to his boxing master, Lin Xian, a resident of the county seat. Two months later, in the tenth lunar month, Lu Mao decided to create a brotherhood to engage in what Qing officials described as "criminal activities" (*jiemeng weifei*) and recruited Zheng Liang, Wang Chui, and Huang Shi into it; they in turn recruited a few of their own friends. Thus, on December 8 (QL 32/10/18), a group of ten gathered at Lu Mao's to form a blood covenant before the gods (*baishen jiemeng*). Lu was selected as the "elder brother," He Zhe as the "second brother," and Lin Xian as the "third brother." The group then "united their hearts" by drinking a mixture of wine and incense ash. With the ceremonies out of the way, Lu Mao gave all the men a piece of blue and white cotton cloth as authorization to recruit members on their own. He also announced that the plan was to rob the storehouse, treasury, and homes of the "community pillars" of Zhangpu county, and to use their proceeds to carry out a rebellion (*jushi*). Lu then dismissed his nine lieutenants with the instruction to return home and begin recruiting, which they did.⁶⁴

As preparations got under way, Chen Biao (who was certainly in on the plotting but may not have been officially attached to the Lu Mao group) asked He Zhe to solicit Zhao Mingde's participation in the undertaking, perhaps seeking to tap into his network. (If Zhao did participate, he did so with impunity, for he died before his name came to the attention of the Qing officials.) During 1767, Zhao had been actively recruiting and had inducted into his group Chen Pi and "Scarface Dog" Zhang (Zhang Polian'gou).

Scarface Dog resided in Yunxiao, where unemployment had forced him to open a gambling den in his home. His nickname, derived from the numerous scars on his face, was so apt that hardly anyone remembered his real name, Zhang Xingchuo. He and Chen Pi both now acknowledged Ti Xi as their teacher and joined the Tiandihui. Thereafter, Scarface Dog frequently received society members in his home and in his turn recruited four new members: Zheng Cheng and Xu Yan of Zhangpu county and Zheng Shi and Zhang Pu of Pinghe county.⁶⁵

As the time of the uprising approached, Lu Mao cut up more pieces of blue-patterned cloth, as he was

bound to do, for by now he had 332 recruits who had to have some way to identify one another. Finding themselves in need of some compelling symbol around which to rally their followers, Lu and his lieutenants came up with three “spiritual” leaders: an alleged scion of the Song dynasty, Zhao Liangming; a general (*junshi*), Cai Demai; and a generalissimo (*yuanshuai*), Lin Hewu. They also composed a number of songs and poems to describe their undertaking.

Early in the third lunar month of 1768, Lin Xian heard that the guard in Zhangpu was going to be stretched thin for a time because some of the troops had been ordered to the prefectural capital of Zhangzhou for promotion. He hastened to inform Lu Mao. On April 24 (QL 33/3/8), the ten principals gathered at Lin Xian’s to set a date and, after consulting the almanac, lit upon April 30 as the most auspicious time to strike.

Unfortunately for them, as the reality of the situation and their commitment hit home, many of the recruits turned tail and ran, so that on the fateful morning only Wu Sha, Lin Xian, and about eighty others armed with knives and clubs actually joined Lu Mao in an attack on the western gate of the county seat, where the defending guards easily defeated them and killed thirty-three of their number.

The next morning (May 1), as Lu Mao prepared to renew his attack, Qing reinforcements arrived. Seeing no way out, Lu took down his banner and fled. Before the month was out the Qing had arrested 365 alleged participants, including Lu Mao himself, who was tried and executed. But not one of these offenders made any mention of either the Tiandihui or its founder, Ti Xi, in their testimony. At this point, it is impossible to tell whether, as Chen Biao claimed, members deliberately concealed Ti Xi’s name, whether Qing officials simply suppressed any word of the society, or whether the participants themselves failed to mention or even to regard their actions as having been Tiandihui-related.⁶⁶

Scarcely was the first Tiandihui rebellion quashed before plans for the second were being set in motion by Li Amin (alias Li Shaomin), one of the society’s original founders and a longtime friend of Ti Xi’s. A native of Xiaceg village, also in Zhangpu county, Li Amin recruited his good friend Cai Wuqiang, a maker of sweets from the neighboring settlement of Chendaizhen, to join with him in forming a Tiandihui for the purpose of collaborating with a scion of the Ming dynasty to rob the wealthy households of the village and “rise up” (*jushi*). This enterprise got going on November 17, 1769 (QL 34/10/20). Li and Cai promptly set about recruiting followers and proceeded to Changtian (Long Field) village, where they enlisted Shen Runzhong in their cause. Li seems to have been particularly persuasive, for he went to Xiya village on his own and there recruited Guo Xuan, Jin Qin, Lin Hou, Lin Yong, and Qiu Kuo, along with a peasant from Dawu village, Wu Yun. Li told his band that in Pinghe county there was a wealthy person named Zhu Zhenxing who had descended from the Ming dynasty and wanted to lead an uprising. As Li added Wu Yu, Li Jian, Li Zhong, and Lin Yu to his following, he gave each of them a piece of red silk with the name of the office he would hold on the successful completion of the coup and a banner inscribed with the words “Great Ming” (Da Ming).

Plans proceeded apace, but before the endeavor even got off the ground, word of it leaked out, and most of the conspirators were arrested. Although Cai Wuqiang and Li Amin were both executed the following year and many were interrogated, once again neither the name of the Tiandihui nor the name of its founder, Ti Xi, was divulged.⁶⁷

After this failed rebellion, Ti Xi and Chen Biao laid low for a while. Then, in the first lunar month of 1779, Zhao Mingde died,⁶⁸ and Ti Xi himself became mortally ill. On his deathbed, Ti Xi imparted the secrets of the society and the names of his followers, including Chen Biao, Chen Pi, Zhang Polian’gou, and Zhang Pu, to his ne’er-do-well son, Zheng Ji, in the hope that this would be a means of support for him. Instead, having also inherited some temple property on his father’s death, Zheng Ji went to the temple, shaved his head, and changed his name to Monk Xing Yi. He did not delay, however, in transmitting the society’s secrets to one man at the temple (during the third month).⁶⁹

The opportunity to “rise up” was not the only thing that induced people to join the Tiandihui during the early period. Self-interest surely guided some. This seems to have been true in the case of Lin Gongyu, a twenty-seven-year-old Cantonese from Nanpo village, Raoping county, Guangdong, who made his living singing theatrical songs across the border in Pinghe and Zhangpu counties. In 1785, Lin Gongyu was performing at a place in Pinghe county when Lin Sanchang came to visit with him and claim him as a relative. A few months later, Lin Gongyu became engaged to a woman from Pinghe, whereupon Lin Sanchang informed him that he would not be allowed to marry her and take her home unless he joined the Tiandihui. Lin Gongyu agreed, and the following month he went to Lin Sanchang’s library for the initiation.

For the ceremony, held on July 19, 1786 (QL 51/6/24), the men used a table as an incense altar. Lin Sanchang ordered Lin Gongyu to crawl under crossed swords and take an oath to the effect that if he harbored bad intentions, the swords would fall and kill him. Lin Gongyu was instructed to use three fingers when receiving or giving tea or tobacco and told that if he met people on the road who asked where he was from, he was to respond, “From the water” (*shuili laide*), as a code.⁷⁰

For Lai A'en and Lin Ajun, protection was a compelling reason to join the Tiandihui. During the seventh lunar month of 1786, Lai A'en, also from Raoping county, went to visit his sixteen-year-old-son, Lai Niangru, who had crossed the border to sing and act in Fuxing, Zhangzhou. As he neared his destination, Lai A'en was set upon by three or four strangers and robbed of his bundle of three garments. On his arrival, he ran immediately to the theater and reported the crime to the proprietor Liang Abu, who was from Longqi county, Zhangzhou. Liang Abu told Lai A'en that if he joined the Tiandihui, he would be able to retrieve his stolen garments. Lai A'en agreed, and Liang Abu then told him to burn incense and join with him in acknowledging Heaven and Earth. Liang Abu imparted the secrets of the society to Lai A'en and informed him that if he encountered robbers, he had only to extend three fingers and he would be left alone. Liang also transmitted three codes: *Ri yue che ma san qian li* (“Heaven moves as fast as a 3,000-li cart”; or “Day and night, a 3,000-li horsecart”); *Mu-li-dou-shi, zhi Tianxia* (“Know all under Heaven *mu-li-dou-shi*”; or “*Mu-li-dou-shi* will rule all under Heaven”); and *Shun-Tian xingdao hehetong* (“Obey Heaven and join together in creating harmony”).⁷¹

Lin Ajun, a co-villager of Lai A'en's, had much the same experience. His son, Lin Azhen, was also a theatrical performer and in fact roomed with Lai Niangru in Fuxing. During the tenth lunar month of 1786, Lin Ajun paid a visit to his son, who gave him some silver money to take back home. Again, the proprietor of the theater, Liang Abu, interceded, cautioning Lin Ajun that the road was not safe, and that he had better join the Tiandihui for his own protection, which he promptly did.⁷²

Similar motives seem to have inspired Xu Axie of Raoping county. Xu Axie made his living by selling brewer's yeast and often traveled across the border to the shop of Lai Abian in Xiaoxi village, Pinghe county, to procure it. In November 1786, he was robbed on the road near Matang, and on recounting the disaster to Lai Abian, he was informed that if he would enter the Tiandihui, he would avoid such difficulty in the future and have silver returned to him. Xu Axie agreed and joined the Tiandihui immediately. Lai Abian then transmitted to him codes similar to those received by Lai A'en and informed him that if he was about to be robbed, he should simply extend his thumb as a signal for Heaven. If the robber then extended his little finger as a signal for Earth, this meant that he too was a society member and was obliged to leave Lai A'en alone.⁷³

After making himself scarce in the aftermath of the Lu Mao and Li Amin rebellions, Chen Biao surfaced again to reactivate the Tiandihui in 1782. Among his recruits were Li Zhai and his uncle, Chen Qu, who subsequently recruited several other men.⁷⁴ It was in Taiwan, however, that Chen Biao's efforts bore their real fruit, thanks to the work of his disciple Yan Yan, a cloth seller from Yunxiao township Chen met while making the rounds of Pinghe county on the pretext of practicing medicine. Yan Yan became a dedicated recruiter, and when he moved to Taiwan the next year (1783) to set up shop in Zhanghua county, he continued to bring in new members, including, most importantly, Lin Shuangwen of Daliyi village, a market town on the Dadu River of central Taiwan, whom he initiated on April 4, 1784 (QL 49/3/15). Lin Shuangwen, who was to raise a rebellion in later years that thoroughly shook the Qing, was also a native of Pinghe county. Brought to Taiwan by his parents in 1773, he served as a county constable for a time but was perhaps better known as a farmer, petty thief, and cart-puller.

Yan Yan was not plowing new fields here, for Taiwan had already played host to several named societies founded by migrants from Fujian by the time he arrived. Even so, his drive on behalf of the Tiandihui does not seem to have gathered much momentum until 1786, when Zhong Xiang and Zhang Wen formed a unit in the fifth lunar month, Zhu Kai another in the tenth lunar month, and Chen Qiao still another in the eleventh. Lin Shuangwen also began recruiting followers of his own. During the third lunar month of 1786, three members joined his Tiandihui; subsequent initiations during the fifth, eighth, tenth, and eleventh lunar months added such relatives and friends as Lin Han, Lin Ling, Lin Shuifan, Zhang Si, and He Youzhi.

It is at this point that the Tiandihui ceased to be exclusively a product of a mobile, alien migrant society and increasingly became assimilated into indigenous communities. As young men like Lin Shuangwen, who were at least marginally attached to the institutions of those communities, began joining, they adapted the Tiandihui to their own purposes, which included mutual aid, collective violence, and rebellion.

The uprising that immortalized Lin Shuangwen in history arose against a background of intense ethnic

rivalry and widespread resentment of governmental corruption. Conflict of this sort between settlers from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou had been brewing in Zhuluo county since 1782–83. But the spark that set off Lin Shuangwen's mobilization of his Heaven and Earth Society (Tiandihui) and brought the government down on him grew out of the disputes between two brothers, Yang Guangxun and Yang Mashi, over the property division of their father, Yang Wenlin. The first to act was the adopted elder brother, Guangxun, who on July 25, 1786 (QL 51/7/1), created an Increase Brothers Society (Tiandihui). Each of its seventy-five members was paid two silver dollars against future services. All their names and addresses were duly recorded in a membership book.

Not to be outdone, the natural son and younger brother, Yang Mashi, gathered twenty-four of his friends, paid them 500 *wen* of cash apiece, and formed an organization of his own, which he named the Leigonghui (God of Thunder Society). Word of these activities soon leaked out, and on August 27, 1786 (QL 51/7*/4), the father, Yang Wenlin, and several members of both societies, including the younger son, Yang Mashi, were arrested.

Forty-seven of the Increase Brothers Society members who managed to escape, bent on freeing their captured friends, then proceeded to set fire to the inn in which they were being held. All they succeeded in doing is getting more of their comrades arrested. Among those apprehended was Yang Guangxun, who was executed on September 21 (QL 51/7*/29). When Yang Mashi was exiled to His, five of his former society "brothers" fled to Daliyi, the village of Lin Shuangwen. Excesses on the part of officials sent to arrest them finally caused Lin Shuangwen to strike out against the Qing.⁷⁵ In the eleventh (lunar) month of 1786, Lin Shuangwen was ordered to hand over the five members of Yang Guangxun's band hiding in Daliyi. When he refused, the officials burned some small houses at the side of the village, including Lin Pan's, to force the villagers to surrender the culprits. (Lin Pan was already a member of Lin Shuangwen's Tiandihui.)

The uprising proper broke out on January 17, 1787 (QL 51/11/28), when Lin ordered the Tiandihui to resist the authorities.⁷⁶ No detailed plans had been laid beforehand by the leaders, but the movement quickly gathered steam. The rebels rapidly occupied Zhanghua, Fengshan, and Zhuluo, leaving the Qing army in full control only in the prefectural city of Tainan; Lin Shuangwen proclaimed himself the "covenant master" (*mengzhu*) and established a reign title of "Obey Heaven" (*Shun-Tian*); and the rebel army, fighting under the slogans "Obey Heaven and follow the Way" (*Shun-Tian xingdao*) and "Suppress corrupt officials" (*Jiaochu tanguan*), managed to push the battle for over a year. So successful was the uprising that the court had to dispatch troops from seven provinces and expend one-third of the treasury in its suppression. Ironically, it was through the Taiwanese connection that the Qing authorities first learned of an organization that had been operating right under their noses on the mainland for at least two decades.⁷⁷

The Activities of 1787–1795

Repercussions of the Lin Shuangwen affair were felt almost immediately back in Zhangpu county, where He Ti of Huangfeng village, Fang Kaishan of Dingfang village, and Zhang Majiu of Meitianshe planned what would be the county's third Tiandihui uprising in twenty years.⁷⁸ On December 24, 1787 (QL 52/11/16), Zhang Majiu went to He Ti's house, where he met Zhang Nan and Qiu Wa. The men discussed their poverty and decided on an "enterprise." The plan was to gather recruits to attack and rob the Zhangpu county storehouse. If they were successful, the rebels would use their newfound resources to resist the Qing army; if not, they would take a boat, cross to Taiwan, and join with Lin Shuangwen. The matter was further discussed by He Ti, Fang Kaishan, and the Zhangs. Eventually, the ringleaders added a few others to their circle, bringing the total to nine.

Taking their lead from Lu Mao and Lin Shuangwen, the men made some red silk banners bearing the words "Obey Heaven" (*Shun-Tian*) to use as their standards. Zhang Majiu made a wooden seal inscribed with his self-proclaimed title, "Obey Heaven General" (*Shun-Tian jiangjun*). He also adopted Lin Shuangwen's slogan "Obey Heaven and follow the Way," and spread the rumor that he had been sent by Lin. The nine men then swore an oath of loyalty, created a Tiandihui, and recruited 108 men to their cause. (Twenty-eight of the recruits were named Zhang, twelve Chen, and twelve Huang; the others were of twenty different surnames.)

In the event, their actions did not live up to their rhetoric. The band entered the county seat on January 19, 1788 (QL 52/12/12), and began what amounted to a month of plunder, pillage, and armed robbery of everything from private homes to government storehouses and salt facilities until troops were finally brought in from Zhangzhou to put a stop to their activities.⁷⁹

Not long after, there were new attempts to revive the Tiandihui in Taiwan. The instigator was Zhang Biao, a native of Zhangzhou living in Zhanghua who did not get on with his neighbors from Quanzhou.

Because many members of his household held grudges, he decided to create a society (hui) for the purpose of xiedou. On September 6, 1790 (QL 55/ 7/28), he ran into Xie Zhi from Guangdong, to whom he spoke freely of his intention to organize a society to carry out an “enterprise.” Xie Zhi, as it happened, had given refuge to Chen Xin, a Tiandihui member who was on the run from the Lin Shuangwen uprising, and had learned some of the Tiandihui’s rituals and secrets from him. Chen had told him that initiates sacrificed a cock before an incense altar, swore their brotherhood in blood, crawled under crossed swords, and took an oath; and that the oath was then burned, and they were taught the society’s secret codes. Armed with this knowledge, when Zhang Biao announced his intention to form a society Xie Zhi suggested reviving the Tiandihui. The two men agreed to go recruiting and cut a chop carved with the six words, “Revive loyalty and eternal peace” (*Fu zhongxing wan hehe*). They managed to initiate forty-nine men, but in the ninth month, word of the society reached government officials, who took swift measures to arrest the leaders and nip their plans in the bud.⁸⁰

In 1792, there was an equally abortive attempt to revive the Tiandihui on the mainland. The leaders, Su Ye and Chen Sulao, were native Fujianese of Tongan county who had gone to Taiwan to farm. Both had acknowledged Li Shui as their teacher in 1786 and participated in the Lin Shuangwen uprising. Afterward, they escaped into the hills and eventually, in 1792, made their way back to Tongan county in Quanzhou prefecture. There they decided to form a Tiandihui to attack and rob the homes of the wealthy. To this end, they set up crossed swords, burned incense, and swore oaths, and then went recruiting until they had gathered a group of 100.

Because of the government’s hot pursuit, Su and Chen rejected calling themselves Tiandihui and instead made up two characters to change the group’s name to Qingheihui (which affixed the characters *qing*, “green,” and *hei*, “black,” as radicals to the character *qi*, “air” or “essence”). But they did not wish to dissociate themselves from the society and, summoning up Lin Shuangwen’s slogan “Obey Heaven,” they prepared a chop and a placard with the words *Shunguo yuanfen* to show that their organization derived from the original one on Taiwan. Su Ye then composed a poem that all the recruits were forced to learn and instructed them to carry a knife so they could resist any soldiers or troops they encountered on the road.⁸¹

Finally, on September 30 (QL 57/8/13), the two leaders decided that it was time to gather the men and carry out their robbery. But before they could do anything, word of their plan reached the officials. When Su Ye realized there had been a leak, he ordered his followers to raise the standard of rebellion. To obtain money, the band robbed stores in Xindian township on October 12 and 13, 1792 (8/27–28), then moved on to Magang the next day, where they ran up against government troops. Two hundred members were arrested, and 150 killed. Although this enterprise was short-lived, the characters that Su and Chen used in the name of their society became a permanent part of the Tiandihui lexicon.⁸²

Taiwan was the scene of the last two Tiandihui uprisings of the Qianlong period which followed one another in 1795. The first was led by Chen Guangyuan, who resided in Fengshan. On February 15, 1795 (QL 60/1/26), he initiated 109 men into the Tiandihui of which he was “elder brother.” Their target was the county seat, but the plan was to attack a military post first and seize the weapons they needed for that move. But when they struck the post on February 22 (QL 60/2/4), the troops were fully prepared. The leaders were captured as the rank-and-file took to their heels.⁸³

After this defeat, one of the participants, Chen Zhouquan, went into action. Chen Zhouquan was a native of Tongan, Fujian, who had been taken as a child to Taiwan, where he was raised. In 1792, he returned to Fujian to join Su Ye’s Qingheihui. When Su’s forces were defeated at Magang, Chen fled back to Fengshan, Taiwan, where he became a peddler. Forced to flee again with the failure of Chen Guangyuan’s uprising, Chen hid out in Zhanghua, where he took advantage of skyrocketing grain prices to plot an uprising of his own. After recruiting followers from Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, and Guangdong, he designated one to serve as the overall military leader (*junshi*) and made four others generals (*jiangjun*). He next spread the rumor that a descendant from the Zhu Yigui uprising (1721) named Zhu Jiutao would arrive with several thousand ships filled with horses and troops on May 3 (QL 60/3/15). By way of other preparations, the rebels made a banner bearing the words *Da mengzhu Zhu* (“Great alliance head Zhu”) and cut a square chop, with one character in each corner, “*shu*,” “*yang*,” “*gong*,” “*ji*” (i.e., “Looking forward to achievement of the project”), and a pear in the center encircling the character for Zhu.

The rebellion commenced on May 1 (QL 60/3/13) and had a brief initial success. The participants managed to occupy Lugang harbor, from where they decided to move on to the county seat of Zhanghua. Reaching the city on May 2 (3/14), the rebel army, assisted by the Tiandihui members there, attacked the western gate, where many were killed. Then, with the arrival of Qing reinforcements on May 5, the rebels’ progress was completely halted. A few days later, they retreated from the city. Chen Zhouquan himself was

captured and executed.^{[84](#)}

Although none of these rebellions posed a serious threat to the government, Qing officials wanted no replay of the Lin Shuangwen affair and consequently intensified their campaign against the Tiandihui. In response to the deliberate attempt of Zhang Biao and Xie Zhi to revive the Tiandihui at Zhanghua in 1790, the government incorporated a new provision in the Revised Legal Code (*Da-Qing lǐlǐ*) of 1792 that mentioned the Tiandihui by name for the first time and so made it clearly illegal:

[Regarding] unlawful elements on Taiwan who clandestinely form societies, revive the Tiandihui [*fluxing Tiandihui*], commit robbery, and resist arrest, the leaders, those who induce people to join gangs, and offenders, who intend to commit robbery, will be sentenced to immediate decapitation. Those who have not recruited members or who have been tricked or coerced into joining will be sentenced to strangulation.^{[85](#)}

Since the Tiandihui was now a proscribed association, members quickly responded by changing the name of their society in the hope of avoiding detection. Thus although Taiwan had previously played host to some organizations bearing the same name, the Xiaodaohui (Small Knife Society) formed in Fengshan in 1794 was the first of many societies to be called something other than Tiandihui and still be part of the Tiandihui system.^{[86](#)}

This Small Knife Society was organized by Zheng Guangcai, originally a native of Fujian who had grown up in Fengshan. With no regular means of earning a living, Zheng set himself up as a guardian of the countryside and depended on people giving him small fees for his “protection.” If he was without clothes or other necessities, he would try to cajole or, if necessary, would strongarm the villagers into supplying them to him.

Members of the Guangdong community filed a complaint. Fearing that if he was arrested, no one would help him, Zheng remembered that Tiandihui members used to render mutual assistance to one another, so he decided to organize a branch of his own. His initiation of fifty-four members was held on June 21 (QL 59/5/23); not surprisingly, he was “selected” as the “elder brother.” The initiates first swore an oath that bound them to the death: “If one person has trouble, the rest will join forces in coming to his aid. He who turns his back on the oath will die under the knives.” Each member was then ordered to prepare a knife using an ox horn for a handle, which he was always to carry on his person as both a sign of mutual identification and a means of self-protection; hence the selection of the name Small Knife.^{[87](#)}

From this point, the so-called Small Knife Society spread rapidly throughout the immigrant communities of Taiwan, so rapidly in fact that it was able to launch small uprisings in 1797, 1798, and 1800. All were quickly put down.^{[88](#)}

The Early Tiandihui: An Assessment

The major ritual of the Tiandihui as it took shape in Zhangzhou and Taiwan and was to endure throughout the society’s history was an initiation ceremony in which participants were required to pass under crossed swords, swear an oath of brotherhood before burning incense, “smear their blood” (or imbibe mixtures of wine and the blood of a sacrificial animal), and acknowledge one of their own as “elder brother” or “teacher.” In effect, these actions may have constituted either a reversion to or a continuation of the blood covenants (*meng*) that dated back at least as far as the Spring and Autumn period (722 B.C.-481 B.C.). According to Mark Lewis:

Covenants were forms of oaths in which all parties pledged to uphold a certain set of rules or pursue a certain course of action, but they were distinguished from ordinary oaths through the killing of a sacrificial animal and the drinking of its blood. This ceremony invoked the presence of the gods and ancestors as witnesses who would punish any breach or nonobservance.^{[89](#)}

The procedures of sealing a covenant have been resurrected from both texts and archaeology:

Participants ... first purified through fasting, erected an altar, and then dug a pit in front of it. They sacrificed an animal [usually a sheep], cut off its left ear, placed this in one vessel, and caught its blood in another.... This equation was sometimes heightened through the use of human blood. Blood was then sprinkled on the altar to summon the spirits, and the text of the covenant was read. This text included a list of the participants, the terms of the oath, and sometimes a curse upon those who violated the covenant.

Each of the participants then smeared some blood on his lips while another held the left ear of the animal. After the reading of the text and the smearing of the blood, the sacrificial animal and one copy of the oath, also smeared with blood, were buried in the pit. Other copies of the text were given to the participants, and these were stored in special archives. Every covenant had a master (*zhu*) who directed the proceedings and was charged with enforcing the terms of the oath. The master of the covenant had the honor of drinking the first draught of blood.⁹⁰

The significance of this ceremony was that it was more binding than a mere verbal oath (*shi*) and “extended the sanctions of religion to those interpersonal ties which were not secured through sacrificial duties to common ancestors.”⁹¹ Sworn between people who might otherwise confront one another, these covenants were used to sanctify agreements between non-kin. From the Warring States period (403 B.C.-221 B.C.), the practice of swearing oaths (though not necessarily blood oaths) lived on in China and was implemented in a variety of social contexts, including marriage and the settling of disputes, between people of different surnames or different communities. The swearing of oaths specifically by blood was widely adopted by non-Han tribal groups; most, it seems, eventually used a chicken in sacrifice instead of a sheep or goat.⁹²

Because multisurname brotherhoods were already illegal as early as the Kangxi era, the need for caution was paramount. Thus, a second aim of the Tiandihui’s central rite was to impress on new recruits the solemnity of their vows and the consequences of betraying them. Passing under crossed knives or swords, which would surely fall and kill anyone susceptible to backsliding, no doubt graphically reinforced this message in the initiates’ mind. At the same time, passage under the crossed swords may have symbolized their transition to a new life.

The oaths at this time, in stark contrast to the thirty-six that would come to be used in the mid-nineteenth century, were simple, straightforward compositions of a sentence or two. Initiates merely pledged to come to the aid of one another in times of need, and implored Heaven or various other deities to witness the ceremony and to bring down on the insincere the crossed swords under which they were about to pass.

Tiandihui members may also have adapted another principle of Chinese social organization to their own use: dividing the incense (*fenxiang*). Throughout China, incense burners (*xianglu*) served as the central focus of religious cults founded on the belief that burning incense could put one in contact with the gods. As branch cults formed and founded their own temples, they took some of the incense from their parent group for their own use, which is to say, “divided” it. In the description of Kristofer Schipper:

Whenever a new cult group is formed, its members will fill an incense burner with the ashes collected in the *hsiang-lu* of an already existing cult group of the same saint. The new incense burner is the main ritual object of the newly affiliated cult group and the act of filling it with the ashes provided by the senior cult is its founding rite.⁹³

Typically, members of an emigrant group would take an incense burner and the statue of their god with them and set up shop in their new home. Those who prospered might then build a temple of their own, which could in turn give rise to new subsidiary communities through *fenxiang* rites. According to Schipper, *fenxiang* was important less as a way for people to fulfill their desire to worship a common god than as a means of enabling them to “participate in a circuit of communication and cooperation.”⁹⁴

The *fen-hsiang* institution did not so much aim at the consolidation of local power ... as at establishing communications networks inside as well as outside [people’s] home regions.... The network of *fen-hsiang* relations made any village, any corporation or guild, part of a large communications system.⁹⁵

Although Tiandihui members would initially have been too poor to have established their own temples, they may well have been adapting *fenxiang* practices to their own use in their initiation ceremonies, which were often held in old temples. Incense burners have served as the focus of nearly all Chinese religious activity and as the defining feature of Chinese religious cults. Popular belief also held that Heaven could manifest its support of claimants to the throne or of founders of religious cults through the bestowal of precious objects, such as incense burners, swords, or books. The incense burner, as it appears in the Tiandihui creation myth, the Xi Lu Legend, functions in this way by bringing Heaven’s support to the monks in their endeavor to escape from the destruction of the Shaolin Monastery and to “overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming.”

As the Tiandihui firmed up these practices, a small stock of simple poems or couplets was added whose

aim was to remind members of their society's unique history and purpose. Above all, there were slogans. One went "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" (When speaking always refer to *ben* [i.e., to Heaven and Earth or the Hong Society], and when receiving items always use three fingers). Another ran, "San xing jie-Wan Li, Tao, Hong; Jiulong sheng-Tian Li, Zhu, Hong" (The three surnames joined Wan, Li, Tao, and Hong; after Jiulong ascended to Heaven, Li, Zhu, and Hong). The meaning of the second is obscure, but one reading consistent with archival findings is that the three founders, Li Shaomin, Tao Yuan, and Monk Hong Er, joined Monk Wan to form the Tiandihui, and that after Ma Jiulong ascended to Heaven, Li Shaomin, Zhu Dingyuan and Hong Er disseminated it.⁹⁶

Finally, because the society was constantly expanding, it was impossible for members to be personally acquainted, and so certain code words and secret gestures were devised to assist members in identifying one another, especially in strange or alien environments. The principal password was "five dot twenty-one" (*wudian ershiyi*), a split-character code for "Hong." (This was a way of referring to the character through its component parts, which can break down as the character *nian* for "twenty" and the character *yi* for "one," plus three dots from the water radical and the two dots that appear under the character "twenty-one.") The most common gesture involved the use of the three (middle) fingers, which might be extended toward heaven, or pressed against the chest, or employed in reaching for tea or tobacco. Similarly, because in the society's symbology the thumb represented "Heaven," and the little finger "Earth," members were instructed to grasp their teacups from the bottom with the thumb, index finger, and little finger. Such forms of nonverbal communication no doubt facilitated interaction between members whose dialects were mutually unintelligible.⁹⁷

The earliest description of society rituals comes from Yan Yan, the transmitter of the Tiandihui to Taiwan, who in his testimony of July 19, 1788 (QL 53/6/16), declared:

All who enter this society must establish an incense altar and under crossed swords swear an oath that if a member encounters trouble, the others of the same sect [*jiao*] will exert effort to help him. For fear that members are too numerous to know one another personally, when they meet, mutual recognition is ensured by such secret signals as extending three fingers, as well as by saying out loud, "Five dots twenty-one," which is a secret code for "Hong."⁹⁸

Yan Yan also stated that the members well understood the need for secrecy, and flatly denied any suggestion that the branches kept registers.

It was sometime in this same year that Chen Xin, a participant in the Lin Shuangwen affair, had described the processes of society formation for Xie Zhi, leader of the Taiwan uprising of 1790. As Xie Zhi recalled, Chen Xin told him:

You must establish an incense altar and in front of the gods, sacrifice a chicken, smear its blood, and pass under the knives while saying the following oath to Heaven, "If one person experiences difficulty, everyone will come to his aid. If I break this oath, the knife will fall and destroy my body." Then the paper on which the oath is written is burned in front of the deity. You then drink wine and blood. When you encounter other members of the same society, extend three fingers of the left hand toward Heaven as a secret signal.⁹⁹

By the end of the Qianlong reign, then, the unique combination of circumstances that had made Zhangzhou such a special environment had spawned the Tiandihui as well. Like society fathers elsewhere in the region, the founders of the Tiandihui drew inspiration from a milieu characterized by overpopulation, social dislocation, collective violence exacerbated by lineage feuding, and sworn brotherhoods, and from it, created an organization capable of responding to this environment in a variety of ways. The lead players in the process, at this and later stages, as we have seen, came specifically from two of Zhangzhou's counties. The founder, Ti Xi, and the men who led the first two continental uprisings, Lu Mao and Li Amin, were natives of Zhangpu. Yan Yan, the person responsible for spreading the society to Taiwan; Lai Abian, the man who recruited Xu Axie of Raoping county, Guangdong; and Lin Shuangwen, the leader of the largest peasant uprising of the eighteenth century, were all natives of Pinghe. Given the long tradition of out-migration from this heavily populated, land-scarce region, the fact that Zhangzhou people were so instrumental in the spread of the society does not come as much of a surprise.

It is also clear that the founders of the Tiandihui—men such as Ti Xi, Zhu Dingyuan, Tao Yuan, Li Shaomin, Chen Biao, and Yan Yan—hailed from the lowest and most marginal ranks of Chinese society. As priests, medical practitioners, exorcists, conjurers, and cloth-sellers, these were men preoccupied above all with the issue of survival.

The rank-and-file came from the same stratum of society. Among the 455 early society members for

whom we have depositions, 92 were hired laborers, 73 peddlers or small retailers, 52 monks, 15 peasants who cultivated their own land, 14 tutors of children; 10 hired laborers on boats, 9 handicraftsmen, 9 runners, 8 singers, 6 fortune tellers, 5 doctors, 3 household servants, 3 soldiers, 2 cultivators of mountain, as opposed to valley, land, 2 tea sellers, 2 timekeepers who beat out the hour on gongs, 2 gamblers, 1 necromancer, 1 woodchopper, 1 horse seller, and 1 private (and illegal) salt seller. Twelve of the 455 had no means of employment, and there were 132 farmers, hired laborers, or peddlers whose occupations could not be individually differentiated.¹⁰⁰ There was not one gentryman, scholar, officeholder, or member of the elite to be found in the entire group.

It is clear from this occupational breakdown that the more peripatetic members of society—peddlers, handicraftsmen, hired laborers, monks, and the like—constituted the bulk of the Tiandihui's membership. Among their most important needs were protection against insults and extortion while away from home or while trying to assimilate into a new one and support networks to which they could resort in times of trouble. Thus, in the first instance, we may think of the Tiandihui as a kind of poor man's *huiguan*, or native-place association, for China's déclassé migrants.

Huiguan, according to Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawski, provided meeting grounds, lodging, financial assistance, storage facilities, and sometimes even the regulation of trade for their members, who tended to consist of the financially stable elements of society and who at some level or other shared a common native place and had recourse to the organization's assistance while away from home. But huiguan were much more than mutual aid societies; they were also relatively formal, corporate organizations that managed communal property acquired by the contributions or fees of their members. At the core of most of them was a shrine to a patron deity that provided a "structure for collective celebrations and a symbol of the community."¹⁰¹ Given the zeal with which men of Zhangzhou and Quanzhou founded huiguan in Taiwan and other parts of China, it is not surprising that their less well-off counterparts might endeavor to create similar units of their own.

Obviously, the Tiandihui was far less incorporated and native place-specific than the huiguan, but just as the huiguan afforded a sense of community and protection to society's well-established sojourners, so the Tiandihui held out to its members a theoretical fraternity of their own. Initiations of new members provided occasions for collective celebrations, where incense was burned and loyalty pledged before plaques or portraits of the founder and other members of the society's "sacred corps." On some occasions, initiates were also presented with cloth or paper certificates as proof of their membership in palpable communities, which, at least in theory, could be summoned to their assistance in times of need.

This aim was explicitly stated in Yan Yan's testimony of 1788:

Originally, the reason for people's willingness to enter the society was that if you had a wedding or funeral, you could get financial help from the other society members; if you came to blows with someone, there were people who would help you. If you encountered robbers, as soon as they heard the secret code of their own society, they would then bother you no further.¹⁰²

In the documents of the First Historical Archive, 196 members, including both leaders and followers, are on record on what brought them to join the Tiandihui in the first place. Their reasons accord with what Yan Yan was saying: 83 (or 42 percent) indicated that mutual aid was their primary motivation, and 73 (37 percent) mentioned resisting arrest or protection against violence. For 31 (16 percent) collecting money for their own use was the principal attraction. Only 9 (5 percent) admitted that raising the flag of rebellion was their primary motivation.¹⁰³

In setting themselves up as a mutual aid network, Tiandihui members were responding to a milieu in which the need for protection prevailed. In the absence of a government capable of guaranteeing its subjects safety on the road and security in their person, people had been forming their own mutual aid organizations since at least the early eighteenth century to undertake these functions for themselves.

At the same time, access to capital was often almost impossible for people without personal possessions to pawn or connections to wealthy landlords or gentry who might give them loans. As we have seen, fundpooling cooperatives of various sorts used sworn brotherhoods to create organizations whose members loaned money to one another. This practice, too, flourished during the early eighteenth century, and overseas Chinese communities still form the same sort of *yinhui* (silver societies) today.¹⁰⁴

Thus, as an organization for mutual aid, the Tiandihui held out the possibility of assistance not only to social transplants from the outside, but also to the marginal members of the settled society, who were

equally likely to be targets for the harassment of local officials or the extortion of local bullies. Brotherhoods based on fictive kinship could extend the personal networks (*guanxi*) of such people more widely.

But as we have seen elsewhere in Chinese history, protection frequently shaded off into predation, and the Tiandihui was no exception, for elements of extortion, racketeering, or “criminal entrepreneurship” emerged almost at once.¹⁰⁵ We can only speculate on the degree to which the rank-and-file truly felt a sense of community and the extent to which they ever summoned the brotherhoods to their aid, but the evidence clearly indicates that their leaders did use these ties to implement entrepreneurial agendas of their own.

In keeping with the local custom of making fast money wherever possible, the prospect of charging new members small initiation fees and pocketing the proceeds seems to have been a compelling motivation for society formation almost from the beginning. This was unmistakably what the dying Ti Xi had in mind when he imparted the society’s secrets to his ne’er-do-well son, Zheng Ji (Xing Yi). Moreover, Yan Yan explicitly testified that the money-making possibilities were one inducement for people to form branches, for “if you were to transmit the sect [*chuanjiao*] to other people, you would also receive their payments of ‘gratitude.’”¹⁰⁶

Because the Qing authorities did not learn of the Tiandihui’s existence until 1787, the first specific example of how these fees worked dates only from that year, when Lin Zhongyu, Yan Tuo, and Li Shui paid between 200 and 300 *wen* of copper *cash* apiece to join the society run by Zhang Pu of Pinghe county.¹⁰⁷ Ten years later, in 1797, individuals from Jianyang and Chongan, Fujian, were described by government officials as having joined forces in forming Tiandihui for the explicit purpose of “swindling money” (*pianqian*) from recruits, each of whom paid between 200 and 300 *wen* for the privilege of not being taken advantage of by others.¹⁰⁸

Some leaders founded and mobilized societies with the specific intent of carrying out armed robberies which, along with petty piracy, constituted a time-honored survival strategy often resorted to by the region’s most impoverished inhabitants. Again, owing to the relatively late discovery of the Tiandihui and the officials’ preoccupation with rebellion at the time, evidence for the Qianlong period is thin. Many incidents of this kind probably either went unreported or were not linked to the Tiandihui. Nevertheless, robbery was certainly among the activities in which some early Tiandihui leaders engaged before they mounted their rebellions. This was true, as we saw, of both Lu Mao and He Ti.

But the Tiandihui did not remain solely an instrument of predation, for once having banded together, many groups quickly became instruments for carrying out a variety of local agendas that might combine elements of protection with predation. Feuding (*xiedou*), for example, involved not only predation against rivals, but protection against their retaliation, and thus required the building of defensive resources. Lin Shuangwen’s Tiandihui in Taiwan was created in direct response to the *xiedou* activities of Yang Guangxun and Yang Mashu. In the words of David Ownby, “The rebellion was as much a *xiedou* encounter as a conscious, Tiandihui-led uprising.”¹⁰⁹ Likewise, *xiedou* was the purpose behind Zhang Biao’s and Xie Zhi’s attempt to revive the society at Zhanghua in 1790. Recall that Zhang Biao was a native of Zhangzhou who did not get on with his neighbors from Quanzhou and so formed a society to seek revenge against them. As we will see, *xiedou* continued to be a part of Tiandihui activities well into the Daoguang era and in fact triggered the society’s first uprising in Guangdong, in 1802.

Few regions of China were as insurrection-prone as the southeast coast in the period when the Qing were attempting to consolidate their rule, and the Tiandihui, as we have also seen above, could be readily transformed into a vehicle for rebellion. Indeed, the society had barely been in existence seven years before Lu Mao launched the first of what would become a tradition of society-inspired uprisings. Yet this rebellion was wholly free of Ming restorationist rhetoric, a fact that thoroughly undercuts the claim that the early members of the Heaven and Earth Society were anti-Manchu.¹¹⁰

Instead, in fabricating Zhao Liangming as the Tiandihui’s spiritual leader, Lu Mao had made his appeal to an earlier dynasty, the Song. From the failure of that uprising, Tiandihui leaders soon learned that for whatever reason, perhaps owing to the great elapse of time since the dynasty’s demise in 1279, the idea of restoring the Song did not have much appeal. Thus, Li Amin, the leader of the second Tiandihui rebellion, looked a bit closer to home and came up with the idea of associating his enterprise with the Ming. But for all his rhetoric about the Ming descendant Zhu Zhenxing and repeated references to the “Great Ming,” the money used to buy the participation of leaders and followers alike seems to have had a greater appeal than politics in wooing their support.¹¹¹

The same can even be said of the Lin Shuangwen uprising, which has traditionally been regarded as a heroic attempt on the part of the Tiandihui to oust the Qing and restore the Ming. But it is now clear that, contrary to common belief, the rebels never raised any slogan with anti-Manchu overtones. Nor in all the large body of confessions extracted afterward is there any hint of pro-Ming, anti-Manchu sympathies.^{[112](#)}

Ming restorationism was equally absent from the uprisings of the early 1790s, which were much more attempts to revive the Tiandihui of Lin Shuangwen or the uprising of Zhu Yigui than efforts to restore the Ming.

In a word, all available evidence suggests that the Tiandihui's founding creed was mutual aid, not Ming restorationism. Indeed, not only was there no mention of restoring the Ming in any of the uprisings of the Qianlong era as either a rallying point for rebellion or a reason for the creation of the society itself; we do not find any mention either of the historical figure Zheng Chenggong, whose name has so often been linked to its founding.^{[113](#)} The only register (*huibu*) of the era, compiled by Yang Guangxun for his Increase the Brothers Society, consisted solely of a membership list, with no trace of the stories, poems, songs, and argot that would characterize later compilations.^{[114](#)} And the Tiandihui's own creation myth, the Xi Lu Legend, which has served as the source for much of the political ideology attributed to the society by later scholars, had yet to make its appearance.

Although the Tiandihui appears neither to have grown out of any direct association with the historical figure Zheng Chenggong nor to have been founded for the purpose of "overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming," it clearly did adopt restorationist ideology. Since the groups did not keep any written records in the first thirty years and spread their message exclusively through the processes of oral transmission, we may never know for sure when or under what conditions it did so. Archival documents suggest, however, that this ideological thrust did not appear until the Jiaqing era, when society members began regularly producing written materials and when the government's increased attempts to suppress the Tiandihui may have forced it to become more political in its fight for survival.^{[115](#)}

Spread and Elaboration: The Nineteenth Century

When the Tiandihui emerged in 1761-62, there was little to foretell that it would become the most widespread and elaborate of all Chinese huidang. That it succeeded in distinguishing itself from the others was due in part to the way in which the features that had taken shape during the Qianlong era were preserved and handed down by members who spread out to the farthest reaches of Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Jiangxi, Hunan, Yunnan, and Guizhou provinces during the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns. Its loose organizational structure also helped. Branch units were easy to start. Aspiring founders had only to possess a knowledge of the society's oaths or names and some kind of document to legitimize their status as leaders (most often "elder brothers" or "teachers"). Because the major ritual was the initiation ceremony, and leaders demanded that their followers produce new recruits at regular intervals, there was a built-in mechanism for fast growth.

To tie their expanding organization together, Tiandihui members soon developed increasingly elaborate ceremonies, poems, songs, catechisms, hand signals, and code words. At the same time, the society remained flexible. There was room for variation in customs and yet enough similarities that local alterations did not obscure the original intent, and members from different regions could still recognize themselves as "brothers."

The Spread of the Tiandihui in Fujian Province

In the early Jiaqing period, the expansion of the Tiandihui was still closely connected to the wanderings of men direct from its source in Zhangpu and Pinghe counties. Although we have records for only a few of the hundreds or perhaps even thousands of societies that emerged, the processes through which these units were created are well documented: self-designated leaders repeatedly recruited bands of between ten and a hundred members, took up collections, and held initiation ceremonies during which they revealed society "secrets." "Elder brothers" then encouraged certain followers to found chapters of their own, and as they did so, new leaders, in their attempts to replicate ceremonies conducted for them, often introduced new procedures.

The Firming Up of Society Ritual

Many of the customs that came to be associated with the Tiandihui when its presence among the overseas Chinese brought it under the scrutiny of European civil servants at the end of the century appeared early in Fujian province. During the Jiaqing era, several new initiation props joined the repertoire of old ones, including sacred plaques or placards commemorating the founder Ti Xi (also called Monk Hong Er and Wan Ti Xi). These plaques were placed on the altar along with the incense, and members usually took their oaths before them. Joining the commemorative plaques on the altars were wooden grain measures (*midou*) containing rice and a variety of objects, typically rulers, scissors, scales, and flags.¹ Often a large variegated or red flag was inserted into the center of the mudou to serve as its visual focal point. As time went on, the flags became more elaborate and eventually bore slogans or phrases.

Passing under crossed swords continued to be a part of nearly every initiation ceremony. On some occasions, new members had to crawl under "bridges" of red, blue, and white cloth guarded by men with upraised knives as a further test of their sincerity. Among some groups, the crossed swords themselves were said to have changed into "iron" bridges. Crossing under the "bridge," in whatever form it took, served another purpose, representing the passage from one life to a new one.

The phrase "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" continued to remain at the heart of the society's secrets, but gradually the "five dot twenty-one" code for "Hong," prevalent during the Qianlong era, was replaced by the words "three, eight, twenty-one" (*sanba nianyi*). Like its predecessor, this was a veiled reference to

the name Hong. (The “three” stood for the three dots in the character’s water radical; the character “eight” appeared at the bottom of the character below the character *nian* for “twenty,” which rested upon the *yi* for one.) New couplets, rhymes, and incantations were gradually added, and the catechisms that so marked later Tiandihui initiation ceremonies made their appearance as well.

As the society’s lexicon expanded, so did the need for books and records. Eventually, the possession of a register, the repository of all the argot, rhymes, and songs, became the most important credential for society leadership. Once installed, leaders often allowed trusted disciples to copy sections of their personal manuals for use in spreading the society to others. It became increasingly common for members’ names to be recorded on lists, which were either burned for the gods or retained by the leaders for their personal use. Carved chops also became a part of society paraphernalia.

Finally, as the society grew, the symbols for members’ mutual recognition expanded. Along with the secrets, members were often presented with tokens of membership such as strings of coins or flags, but more often than not, they included documents stamped with the leader’s seal or printed from his wooden block. If these items served as a kind of private identification between a teacher and his disciples or in some cases as authorization to found a branch, more public gestures served to distinguish society “brothers.” One group would agree to coil their queues in a certain manner, another to leave certain buttons of their jackets open, another to roll the flaps of their collars in a specific fashion.

Expansion Along the Province’s Migration Paths

Much of the migration within Fujian province during the Jiaqing period was from southeast to northwest: out of the coastal prefectures of Zhangzhou, Quanzhou, and Xinghua, where grain was scarce and rice prices high, to the inland, mountainous regions of Shaowu, Yanping (now Nanping), and Jianning, where people were fewer and rice was in ample supply, and presumably cheaper.²

As Evelyn Rawski has pointed out, rugged terrain restricted intercourse between Fujian and its neighboring provinces to three major routes that required travel by water as well as land. Astride the province’s oldest and most popular transportation route lay Jianning, comprising the two district seats of Jian’an and Ouning, from where migrants could make their way to Jiangxi province via one of the branches of the Min River. Going north up the Nanpu branch from Jianning, one could reach the county seat of Pucheng and from there go by land through the Fenling Pass to Jiangxi. Alternatively, one could go northwest up the Qian and Chong branches from Jianning through Jianyang to Chongan county and then through the Fengshui Pass into Jiangxi.

As Fujian’s largest inland commercial center and interior link to the markets of the lower Yangtze, Jianning commanded a strong position in the long distance trade of the day, as well as a considerable local market of its own. Tea from the Bohea Hills (Wuyi shan) was Jianning’s most famous cash crop. Paper was produced in the county seat of Jianyang, and the prefecture boasted enough silver mines to attract workers from the outside.³

Thus, it is not surprising to find the Tiandihui making an early appearance in Jianning. By way of example, consider the case of Hou Erbaxiong (also known as Hou Xiangxing), a refugee from the law who fled north and brought the society’s secrets with him. Hou had been the chief disciple of Wang Guang, a native of Quanzhou who had moved up the coast into Minqing county, Fuzhou prefecture, to seek employment in a bowl factory. In the third lunar month of 1801, Wang, Hou, and four friends had together formed a group called the Double Knife Society (Shuangdaohui). The five men acknowledged Wang as their teacher, and he in turn imparted to them the secret code that had long been associated with the Heaven and Earth Association—“Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan.” Wang had singled out his fellow migrant Hou Erbaxiong, who was originally from Xianyou county, in the coastal prefecture of Xinghua, for special treatment, presenting him with a small red cloth flag and a huibu (register) at the time of his initiation.⁴

Upon hearing that he was wanted for arrest, Hou Erbaxiong had gone underground and eventually fled upstream to the hills of Jianning, where he earned his living as a hired laborer. But as the years passed, he found it impossible to make ends meet and so conceived the idea of reviving the Double Knife Society as a way to obtain money. On September 22, 1815 (JQ 20/8/20), he rounded up twenty-two men, who quickly recruited friends and relatives for a total body of ninety-four.

The recruits gathered September 27 (8/25) on a mountaintop between Gutian and Jian’an counties (Jianning prefecture). Each paid between 200 and 300 wen apiece and acknowledged Hou Erbaxiong as his teacher. Hou then set up a spirit table with representations of Guanyin (the Goddess of Mercy) and the Earth God, inserted two crossed knives into the ground, and ordered each initiate to pass underneath while

swearing an oath of mutual aid. He next passed along the secret codes and poems and sacrificed a cock, whose blood was mixed with wine and drunk by all the “brothers.” Seven of his most trusted students were then allowed to read the register (*huibu*) given to him by Wang Guang.

A few days later, Hou met one of his principals, Cai Minglang, on the road. Cai complained of being broke. Thereupon, the men hatched a scheme to recruit a dozen or so additional members and to raise 10,000 wen from each house in Wudun village of Gutian county. As they tried to collect these fees, villagers’ complaints brought the county authorities down on the society, suppressing it before it even got going.⁵

We find at least one variation of the Tiandihui soon being formed by a man from the neighboring province of Jiangxi. This was the Baizihui (The 100 Sons Society), formed in 1805 by Li Yugao, in Ouning county, Jianning prefecture, which was almost on the Jiangxi border. (The group’s name was based on the old idea that many sons were tantamount to great prosperity and came from the popular pictures of 100 sons associated with the Spring Festival that are still widely available in Chinese gift shops today.) During the tenth lunar month, Li enticed Ke Shangyuan and nine others to join his society. The men paid him 200 wen apiece and in return Li transmitted to them the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan.” The initiates then sealed their compact by drinking a mixture of cock’s blood and wine.⁶ A few years later, in 1811, one Jiang Bizai, finding himself in financial straits, recruited thirty-nine men and formed a 100 Sons Society of his own at Jianyang.⁷

The second of Fujian’s major trade routes originated in Yanping prefecture, whose seat, Nanping, was located directly up the Min River from Fuzhou and formed the jumping-off point for further upstream migration to Shaowu prefecture. From there, one could proceed on upstream to Guangze county (Shaowu prefecture) and enter Jiangxi through the Tieniu Pass. Like Jianning, Yanping became an early site of Tiandihui activity. In the second lunar month of 1805, Huang Kaiji, a tailor from Changting county, Tingzhou prefecture, who had made his way to Nanping, recruited fifty-nine people to form a society with a familiar name—the Increase Brothers Society. But unlike its namesake in Taiwan, this Fujian group was clearly part of the Tiandihui system.

From Huang’s founding, the Increase Brothers Society seems to have taken hold, because a year later Li Wenli, a native of Jinjiang county, Shaowu prefecture, and twenty-one others joined a society by that name led by Zheng Xingming.

For their initiation, held on May 1, 1806 (JQ 11/2/13), in an empty temple of Dalikou, Nanping, Zheng erected an altar (god table), wrote a placard with the name Monk Wan on it, and inserted a seven-star lamp (representative of the so-called “seven planets”), a pair of scissors, a mirror, a ruler, a sword, and a five-color flag into a midou. Each of the initiates had to walk under crossed knives and swear an oath of mutual aid. Zheng then transmitted to them the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan” and instructed them to extend three fingers when giving or receiving objects to signal their membership. Each of the inductees paid Zheng 220 wen before departing. Afterward, Zheng gave Li Wenli a register and encouraged him to cultivate disciples of his own. But Li discovered that the register contained such “seditious-sounding” words as “Obey Heaven” (*Shun-Tian*), the slogan used in the Lin Shuangwen uprising. Not daring to keep it, he copied only some of the poems and incantations from the back of the book before casting it into the flames.

A few years later, Li Wenli recruited ten more men into the group. Their initiation was held at Futun in Shunchang county, also in Yanping prefecture, on July 17, 1810 (JQ 15/6/16). After paying 200 wen each, the men acknowledged Zheng Xingming as their teacher and received the society’s secrets from him. From Yanping, the society then spread north, on April 19, 1814 (JQ 19/2/29), Li Wenli became a “teacher” in his own right by creating a branch of the Increase Brothers Society at Huangdun, in Jianyang county, Jianning prefecture. On this occasion, twenty-seven members paid 250 wen each for his secrets.⁸

High in the heart of Hakka country, the third of Fujian’s major routes to the outside started in Tingzhou prefecture, which also formed the county seat of Changting. From Tingzhou, it was just a short distance across the border to Huichang county (Ruizhou prefecture), Jiangxi. Tingzhou also linked Fujian and Guangdong provinces, for one could simply sail down the Ting River to Chaozhou prefecture (Guangdong).

The Tiandihui found fertile ground in Tingzhou, where immigrants had to cope with the hostility of a population that was thinly scattered in small villages. The prefecture boasted only a few large towns, and farming was generally confined to the narrow strips of valley floors or terraced hillsides.⁹ One of the earliest branches appeared under the name Harmonious Righteous Society (Heyihui) in Yongding county,

almost on the border with Guangdong. In this case, the transmission agent was Chen Bang, a seller of tea leaves from Zhangpu.

In the course of a trip during the fourth lunar month of 1802, Chen was introduced to Zhang Peichang by a man named Huang Huaceng. Zhang, a native of Xianyou county in Xinghua prefecture, had moved west almost entirely across the province, to run a jewelry store in Yongding. As the three men began to chat, Zhang Peichang pointed out the difficulties of a man on his own trying to earn a living away from home and spoke of his fears of being insulted and bullied by others. At this, Chen Bang told him that he himself was protected as a Tiandihui member, and that if Zhang was willing to enter the society, he too could receive its protection. Zhang agreed and was invited, along with Huang Huaceng, to acknowledge Chen Bang as his teacher. Zhang and Huang duly handed over 400 wen of copper *cash* for the privilege of joining, and Chen Bang, in turn, passed along the society's secrets, including the phrase “Yimian buxiangzhi; jinri lai xiangfeng” (We never met before, but from today we are mutually acquainted) before returning to Zhangpu.

Huang Huaceng fell ill the next month and was having a hard time keeping body and soul together. On June 15 (JQ 7/5/16), now in desperate straits, he went to Zhang Peichang's store to borrow money. Since Zhang himself was hard-pressed, he suggested that the two of them create a Tiandihui branch of their own as a means of generating cash. Huang agreed, and a few days later, they took in a total of 5,900 wen from twenty-four recruits. Because Tiandihui members were by now being severely searched out for arrest, the members chose to refer to themselves as the Harmonious Righteous Society instead.¹⁰

The Increase Brothers Society and its offshoots also seem to have thrived in Tingzhou. Recall that the society's founder, Huang Kaiji, before making his way to Yanping, had originally come from Tingzhou, and during his absence, other branches of the society made their appearance in his home territory. One of these bore the odd name of String Together Sons Society (Jianghu chuanzihui), derived from the idea of “stringing together” the people of the rivers and lakes into one body.¹¹ It was founded by Zhu Dehui of Wuping county, Tingzhou. Zhu, who earned his living by farming, was aware that there were several Increase Brothers societies in Fujian, and that those who joined received mutual aid. But because these organizations were illegal, he had decided to avoid that name.

In the fifth lunar month of 1808, Zhu recruited sixteen men from Fujian and Jiangxi provinces and assembled them at his house for the initiation. There they burned incense, drank wine, and made obeisance to a holy placard. On one side of the altar was a red wooden club for the express purpose of punishing members unwilling to commit themselves to mutual assistance. The assembly chose Zhu Dehui as its “universal elder brother” (*zong dage*) and lined up according to age. Zhu Dehui gave each of the men half a coin and a piece of red cloth stamped with his name for identification purposes. The members' names were then recorded in a huibu, and each paid between 500 wen and a yuan or two of foreign silver for the privilege of joining.¹²

Another branch of the Increase Brothers Society was founded in the ninth lunar month of 1812 at Wuping, in Tingzhou prefecture, by Xie Guoxun. Xie's initiation ceremony was very much in keeping with the ones discussed above, and at its conclusion, members agreed to identify themselves by leaving the second button of their outer garments open and letting the ends of their queues stick up through the coils on top of their heads.¹³

An offshoot of the Increase Brothers Society sprang up soon after in Tingzhou. This was the Benevolent Justice Society (Renyihui), formed in 1813 in Ninghua county by Xiong Mao, a native of Shicheng county, Ningdu prefecture, Jiangxi, who had moved just across the border to Ninghua, where he earned his living as a jewelry maker. Ten years earlier, on May 5, 1803 (JQ 8/3/15), Xiong and his relative Yi Yangxian had joined Li Dalu's Tiandihui, and in return for their 330 wen membership fee, he had taught them the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan.” Li had also given each of them a volume of formulas or incantations, along with a triangular wooden chop to use in printing documents for their own recruits.

At the time, Xiong Mao had gone so far as to carve a chop with his name on it, but hearing that he was wanted for arrest, he did not dare go through with his plan to found a society of his own and laid low for the next several years. Then, in 1813, tired of being poor and emboldened by the lapse of time, Xiong persuaded thirty-three men to join his new Renyihui on April 16 (JQ 18/3/16). Each paid him 330 wen and was given the society's secrets, along with a membership certificate stamped with Xiong's wooden seal. Xiong also copied out a volume of magical formulas and gave it to “Black Dog” Wu. The party then drank a mixture of cock's blood and wine before adjourning.

Later that year, on October 2 (JQ 18/9/8), Xiong Mao formed another unit in Ninghua county. On this

occasion, he set up an altar, had his recruits crawl beneath two crossed knives, ordered the men to swear an oath of mutual aid, and taught them the “three finger” signals. One of the recruits paid a full yuan of foreign silver instead of the standard 330 wen membership fee; this bought him some of the charms and incantations Xiong had obtained from Li Dalu’s book and the privilege of becoming a leader in his own right.

On March 18, 4 (JQ 19/2/27), Xiong Mao, still going strong, found another twenty-five men who were willing to pay 330 wen for his secrets, along with a stamped red paper certifying their membership in the Renyihui. He managed to found three additional units that year before the authorities finally caught him.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Renyihui had spread north from Tingzhou to Yanping prefecture, and in particular to Sha and Shunchang counties. In the second lunar month of 1814, Huang Kaiji, whom we encountered earlier as the founder of the Increase Brothers Society, initiated Chui Lao’er and thirteen others at a ceremony in a mountain temple at Xiaokengzai, Shunchang. Because the Increase Brothers Society was so well known by now, he changed the group’s name to The Benevolent Justice Society. Later that year, Huang formed three additional units at Guiyang in Jianyang county, Jianning prefecture (on May 11, May 25, and July 1). For these, he managed to entice men from Guangxi province to ally with those from Shanghang and Changting counties (Tingzhou), Fujian.¹⁵

Yet another branch of the Renyihui was created by Li Faguang in Jianning prefecture. Li had belonged to a branch of the Increase Brothers Society in Wuping county, Tingzhou, in 1812, but at some point he had moved north to Jian’an county, where he formed his Renyihui unit in the second lunar month of 1814. In the seventh and eighth lunar months, he founded additional branches in nearby Ouning county (also in Jianning prefecture).¹⁶

From there, the Renyihui took on a life of its own, blending with elements of the Double Knife Society to produce two new groups: the Benevolent Righteous Double Knife Society (Renyi shuangdaohui) and the Benevolent Righteous Three Immortals Society (Renyi sanxianhui). Both were created by Feng Laosan, a native of Jiangxi who had participated in society activities on several occasions in Fujian. In the eleventh lunar month of 1813, Feng cooperated with Chen Shangyuan and fourteen others in forming the Renyi shuangdaohui in Guangze county, Fujian. (Feng’s home county of Nanfeng was just across the Jiangxi border from Shaowu prefecture, not far from Guangze, with which it made a triangle.) During their initiation, the members drank a mixture of blood and wine, after which Feng transmitted the traditional secret code to them. The group subsequently found a few other recruits, for a total membership of eighteen.¹⁷

Feng barely got his first society going before he founded the second. The following month, he invited Xu San and forty-four others to organize at an empty temple on Tiantai mountain in Shaowu county, Fujian. Because the temple housed three statues, the group adopted the name Benevolent Righteous Three Immortals Society. Each person acknowledged Feng Laosan as his teacher, and Feng, in turn, transmitted “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan” to them. Thereafter, society members were to be referred to as “rocks,” and nonmembers as “sand.” The initiates then drank a mixture of cock’s blood and wine, paid Feng Laosan 630 wen of *cash*, and departed.¹⁸

The Increase Brothers Society not only gave rise to the Benevolent Justice Society and its derivatives. Its influence also moved outward from Zhangpu county with the flow of migration north along the coast toward Zhejiang. One result was the founding in Xiapu county, Funing prefecture, of a group that called itself the Father-Mother Society (Fumuhui). Again, unlike the groups of that name created in Fujian and Taiwan in 1728 and 1731, this one was a definite offshoot of the Tiandihui system.

It was formed by Ou Lang, also known as Ou Pinzhong, who had come to Xiapu from Zhangpu. In the sixth lunar month of 1814, hard pressed to earn a living, Ou Lang hit on the idea of forming a society as a way to obtain money for his personal use. Accordingly, he invited Xie Naigui and thirty-five other men to assemble on July 31 (JQ 19/6/15) in an empty mountainside temple. There the initiates acknowledged Ou as their teacher, after which he immediately adopted the name Father-Mother Society and transmitted to them the “three, eight, twenty-one” secret code for the name Hong.

Ou Lang also related to them a simple catechism. When asked, “Where are you from and where are you going?,” members were instructed to say, “I’ve come from the east and am going to the west.” When asked, “Where have you been?,” they were to say, “I have passed under the bridge.” Members were also instructed to use three fingers when receiving tobacco as a sign of mutual recognition. Before the ceremony adjourned, the participants slew a cock and mixed its blood with wine to drink. Each member paid Ou Lang 200 wen and departed.¹⁹

The Increase Brothers Society also gave rise to a group called the Even Head Society (Pingtouhui). Founded in 1820, this group was the work of Jiang Yanu, a resident of Ouning county, located not far from the Jiangxi border. In 1789, Jiang had taken Lin Tongge as his teacher and entered Lin's fourteen-member Increase Brothers Society. At that time, Lin gave Jiang a cloth flag on which was written the slogan "Cong junling Zhu Hongguang ji" (Follow military orders according to the record of Zhu Hongguang). He also transmitted the code "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" and told him that the cloth flag was a symbol for mutual recognition. For this, Jiang Yanu had paid Lin 300 wen.

Thirty-one years later, during the eighth lunar month of 1820, Jiang Yanu's business went bankrupt.²⁰ Since he was having difficulty keeping himself alive, like others before him, he resolved the problem by forming a society. He recruited thirty men, who gathered at an empty factory in Dongli village, Jianyang County (Jianning prefecture), on October 4, (JQ 25/8/28) and elected him as their teacher. For the initiation, Jiang inserted a knife, a ruler, a mirror, and thread into a midou, placed it on an altar, and ordered the men to bow before it. They then cut off the head of a chicken and imbibed its blood mixed with wine as they swore the oath Jiang had selected: "Hereafter if any of us has trouble and the rest are not willing to help him out, then they are the same as the chicken's head." Despite their name (from the collective term for commoners, *pingtou baixing*, or "even-headed commoners,"²¹ meant to indicate that all the members were of equal status), the society was in fact the Increase Brothers in another guise.

With the ceremonies out of the way, the members agreed to coil their queues on their heads with the ends hanging to the right and to leave a button of their shirts open as a means of identification. Jiang Yanu then gave each some coins tied together with a string as proof of membership. It was also understood that if a member was insulted by someone, all he had to do was make an imprint of one of the coins on a piece of paper, stick a feather into it, and deliver it to a fellow member. The recipient was then obliged to go to his aid.

Finally, Jiang Yanu made white cloth flags bearing the words, "Zhu Hongguang ji" (Remember Zhu Hongguang) and gave them to his five principal recruits as authorization for them to spread the society on their own. For their initiation, members paid Jiang between 400 wen and 500 wen each.

On December 10, 1820 (JQ 25/11/5), Jiang Yanu's disciple Huang Sunnu formed his own version of the Pingtouhui, initiating twenty-three members at an empty shack near his home in Jianyang county; and thirteen days later, on December 23 (JQ 25/11/18), another disciple, Chen Guannu, originally of Xincheng county, Jiangxi, followed suit for a group of twenty-one in Jianyang. On March 28, 1821 (DG 1/2/25), the society spread across the border to Jiangxi as still another disciple, Lao Cao, of Nanfeng county (Guangxin prefecture), initiated twenty men at a ceremony in an empty factory. Several months later, he created a second unit of twenty-four (October 20; DG 1/9/25).²²

The Shaowu-Yanping region of Fujian played host to two other Tiandihui derivatives in 1814: the Vast Money Society and the Worship with Incense Society. The Hongqianhui (Vast Money Society), a name that is a homonym for but discrete from the Red Coin Society, was founded by Jiang Wenxing, a native of Nanfeng county, Jiangxi, who moved across the border to Jianning to work with the tribute student (gongsheng) Yang Kerong in signing up recruits.²³

The Baixianghui (Worship with Incense Society) was formed in Sha County, Yanping prefecture. Its founder, Cao Huailin of Changting county, claimed to have created the society to avoid insult and ridicule by others through mutual aid. On March 6, 1814 (JQ 19/2/15), he instructed Deng Enyue and fifty other men to assemble in an empty shack on Goddess of Mercy Mountain in Sha county. The initiates acknowledged Cao as their teacher and paid him between 200 wen and 1,000 wen each. Cao set up an altar topped with incense, sacrificial rice, and other items, and ordered the men to swear an oath of mutual aid. They then sacrificed a chicken and mixed its blood with wine to drink. Their practices were identical to those of the Tiandihui.²⁴

Still another unit to emerge in Fujian was the Mingdenghui (Bright Lantern Society), which was formed in 1816 by Deng Fangbu of Xiapu county. In the ninth lunar month, Deng recruited twenty-four men to gather at an empty temple on White Crane Mountain and form a brotherhood. The members acknowledged Deng Fangbu as their teacher, who then transmitted the secrets of the Tiandihui to them. The name derived from the fact that during the initiation, participants lit one bright lantern.²⁵

In the account presented above, the border prefectures of Yanping, Jianning, Tingzhou, and Shaowu appear as key locations in the development of the Tiandihui in Fujian, and indeed their significance was not lost on Wang Zhiyi, the region's governor-general who, in 1814, remarked that these prefectures were especially noted as hotbeds of society activity.²⁶

Wang Zhiyi's observation was elaborated on in 1848 by the governor of Fujian, Xu Jishe, who wrote:

In the three prefectures of Yan[ping], Jian[ning], and Shao[wu], the folk are customarily especially simple and sincere. But because the area produces tea leaves, much of the terrain consists of barren, uncultivated mountains, outsiders and vagrants with no occupations, one by one band together to come into the region to grow tea, to open the wilds for cultivation, or to work as hired laborers. The ones from this province come from Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, and Yongqun prefectures and are joined by others—"Guest People" [Hakka]—who come in great numbers from the neighboring provinces of Jiangxi and Guangdong.

Some people from the outside get together with the natives and break the law and rob. There is nothing that they do not do. In cases of armed robbery, people from Quanzhou, Yongqun, and Guangdong are the most numerous offenders. In cases involving the formation of societies, people from Jiangxi are the most numerous. Those who rob are evil bandit followers.

As for those who form societies, many reside in foreign villages and fear being ridiculed or insulted, so they cleverly amass followers and take advantage of the opportunity to deceive them by falsely saying that if they join a society and acknowledge a teacher, they can obtain help from many people. The dolts don't know any better, so they are often deceived.²⁷

The Development of the Tiandihui in Jiangxi Province

As we have seen, the border region between Fujian and Jiangxi was a fluid one, where people went back and forth in both directions. Just as there were native sons of Jiangxi who founded societies in Fujian, so there were immigrants from other provinces who joined, and sometimes even founded, societies in Jiangxi. In fact, the Tiandihui in Jiangxi can be said to have been implanted by three principal groups: people from Fujian, who created organizations with rituals closely resembling those of their home associations; people from Guangdong, who were sojourners in the borderland milieu; and people who belonged to various vegetarian sects.

Leaders in Jiangxi, like those elsewhere, founded societies to make money from their followers, and for the most part, their ceremonies resembled those we have already seen. As in Fujian, society founders were usually referred to as teachers (*shi*); society altars often bore plaques of Ti Xi; initiates were asked to crawl under cloth bridges and crossed swords to show their good intent; and chickens were sacrificed for the ritual drinking of blood and wine. The one thing that governed everywhere was the use of the Tiandihui's secret codes, "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" and "three, eight, twenty-one."

In Jiangxi, more than elsewhere, the possession of cloth membership "badges," known as *huatie*, authorized aspiring leaders to found societies of their own.²⁸ *Huatie* were given out only to those who paid a relatively large entry fee. A few copper *cash* would not have entitled a member to such a document, and those who put out only paltry sums received a no-frills initiation that entitled them to the society's secret codes and nothing more. From Jiangxi also seems to have come the idea of referring to society meeting places as "loyalty halls."

Jiangxi Societies Formed by Transmission from Fujian

The areas that saw the greatest flow of migrants to and from Fujian were the border prefectures of Ji'an (with Luling county), Ganzhou, Guangxin, and Jianchang, along with Ningdu Department.²⁹ One of the most famous Tiandihui derivatives, the Three Dots Society (Sandianhui), was a product of this border milieu and the Yongding-Huicheng migration path in particular. Its creator was Zhou Dabin, a native of Huichang county, Ganzhou prefecture, Jiangxi (which was on the border about half way between Changting and Wuping, Fujian), who carried goods on a shoulder pole for his living. In the sixth lunar month of 1806, he ran into his good friends Zeng Alan and Qiu Zongyuan while in Yongding county, Tingzhou prefecture. Zeng Alan told Zhou Dabin that he had joined Lu Shenghai's Tiandihui.³⁰ He also mentioned that members aided one another against the coercion of outsiders and could recruit others for the purpose of extorting money. Zhou Dabin then invited Qiu Zongyuan to join him in entering Lu Shenghai's society in Yongding.

For their initiation, Lu Shenghai made a placard with the name of the society founder Wan Ti Xi on it, and used blue, white, and red cloth to make a bridge under which the initiates had to pass. After swearing an oath, the participants killed a chicken, whose blood was mixed with blood from their own fingers and wine, and drunk. Lu Shenghai then produced a piece of red cloth inscribed with the term *gingshen* ("clear god" or "spirit") and a sheet of red paper for a *huatie*, which bore his name on one side and the reign title "Obey Heaven" (*Shun-Tian*) on the other. After this, Lu transmitted the secret code "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" to the initiates. He also informed them that he was to receive a portion of any money they

received from recruits of their own.

Zhou Dabin apparently wasted no time in putting his huatie to use, for on July 29 (JQ 11/6/14), he initiated a peddler from Anyuan county, along with a man from Changning, into a Tiandihui unit that took shape in Wuping county, Fujian. Then, as the peddler carried on with the founding of more units in Wuping, Zhou returned to Jiangxi and proceeded to found a society at Huichang. Because the name Tiandihui was prohibited and the society was illegal, he settled on the name Three Dots Society in honor of Monk Hong Er (whose name contains the three-dot water radical).

Zhou Dabin essentially followed the procedures he had learned in Fujian: he levied an entry fee of between two and five yuan in foreign silver on his recruits, had them pass under a cloth bridge, and ordered them to drink a mixture of blood and wine. He then gave them a red-cloth huatie inked with the term *qingshen*, with the instruction to go out and recruit others. As it turned out, the best his followers could do was sign up people who would pay only 400 or 500 wen apiece. To these initiates, Zhou simply transmitted the secret sentences without bothering to go through the ritual of killing a chicken and drinking its blood, let alone presenting them with a huatie.³¹

In the next few years, Zhou Dabin and his teacher Lu Shenghai, along with their recruits, continued to spread the Tiandihui/Sandianhui in the Yongding-Huichang region.³² From there it spread into Guangdong through the agency of Yang Jinlang, a native of Pingyuan, Guangdong, who resided in Guangxin prefecture, Jiangxi.³³ Yang Jinlang recruited Liao Yuesi, also of Pingyuan, who then set to work enlisting new members in the region between Ganzhou and Guangdong.³⁴ One of Liao Yuesi's recruits, Zhu Shichong of Anyuan county, Jiangxi,³⁵ in turn recruited Liao Shanqing, from Yongding, Fujian, in 1808. Together, they formed a group under still another name—Honglianhui (Vast Lotus Society).

Liao Shanqing (alias Liao Qing, alias Liao Yuzhang) earned his living as a peddler and often practiced his trade in Guangdong, where he sometimes resorted to robbery. In the fifth lunar month of 1807, he had joined a brotherhood specifically organized for that purpose in Zhenping county, Jiaying prefecture. The leaders of the group were soon arrested, but Liao managed to escape to Huichang, Jiangxi, only to find that he was a wanted man there as well. Still on the run, he had returned to his home in Yongding in late 1807, and there joined a unit of the Tiandihui.

In the second lunar month of 1808, Liao Shanqing went back across the border into Anyuan county, where he discussed forming a society with Lu Shenghai's recruits Liao Yuesi, Zhu Shichong, and Yang Jinlang. Because of the zeal manifested by Qing officials in their drive to exterminate the Tiandihui (whose new name, the Three Dots Society, was by now known to them), the men decided to identify themselves with neither. By taking a new name, they reasoned, it would be easier to attract and "raise" money from others. The ploy apparently worked, for the Honglianhui soon enlisted twenty-two men willing to acknowledge Liao Shanqing as their teacher and pay him between 60 and 100 wen to join. In what was by now a standard initiation, the newcomers took an oath before a sacred placard, passed under a cloth bridge, and drank a mixture of wine and blood.

Afterward, during the second and third lunar months of 1809, many of Liao Shanqing's initiates, including Wang Tengjiao, began founding societies and raising money from recruits in Fujian, Jiangxi, and Guangdong provinces.³⁶ Societies continued to spread in the borderlands between the three provinces throughout 1809, 1810, and 1811, where they became increasingly involved in *xiedou* as well as robbery.³⁷

Jiangxi Societies Formed by Transmission from Guangdong

It was not many years before the Tiandihui began to enter Jiangxi from a different direction—Guangdong. On the Jiangxi side of the border with Guangdong was a mountain basis known as the South Gan (Gan Nan), which had many gardens that produced red and green teas of good quality. Sweet potatoes, a food-stretching source, also grew there, as did oranges, which were planted on the hillsides. Jiangxi province's major mined product was tungsten, and the most important mines were also located along the border, in such places as Gan, Longnan, and Xingguo counties in Ganzhou prefecture and Shangyou county (now in Nan'an prefecture). Migrants from Guangdong entered Jiangxi through the mountain passes (of which Xiaomei was probably the most famous) and were referred to as "shed people" (*pengmin*).³⁸ After 1731, shed people were especially prevalent in Wuning, Xingchang, Wanzai, Yongxin, Shangrao, Yushan, Yongfeng, Guiqi, Qianshan, Leping, Fuliang, and Dexing counties, areas that accommodated many migrants from Fujian as well.³⁹

The major transmission conduits ran from Heping (Guangdong) to Dingnan (Jiangxi) and from Lianping (Guangdong) to Longnan (Jiangxi). To the northwest of Heping county was Jiulian Mountain, to the

southeast was Longquan county (now Laolong), and directly to the north was the border of Dingnan subprefecture.

The Sandianhui took strong hold in this region as the society spread outward from Fujian, until during the 1830's and 1840's the process effectively came full circle with the creation back in Fujian of two new offshoots—the Protect the Home Society (Baojiahui) and the Red Coin Society (Hongqianhui)—through the agency of erstwhile members from Guangdong and Jiangxi.

The first was the work of Li Kui, a native of Longquan county, Guangdong, who had moved to Fujian at the age of ten and earned his living as a tea-grower in Shaowu county. In the eighth lunar month of 1833 (DG 13/8), Li Kui's friend Li Jiangsi, a native of Jiangxi, confided to him that back in Guangdong he had joined a branch of the Sandianhui, also known as the Double Knife Society (Shuangdaohui), and that its members aided one another in time of trouble. Li Jiangsi then went on to suggest that, because Li Kui was living away from home in a strange place, he should become a member too and thus protect himself against insult and injury from the local people. Li Kui agreed to join, as did three of the other men who were approached.

The initiation was held at Li Jiangsi's home. For the ceremony, Li wrote the phrase “Five Ancestors' Seat” (*wuzu zhiwei*) on a piece of red paper and stuck it to the wall; inserted five variegated flags, a scissors, an iron ruler, and a set of scales into a midou; and set up a bamboo hoop, with a wooden sword at each side. He then ordered each initiate to swear an oath and prove his loyalty by passing through the hoop safely, without the swords striking him down. The men acknowledged Li Jiangsi as their teacher, and Li, in turn, wrote each person's name on a list that was immediately burned for the gods. Afterward, the men sacrificed a chicken and drew blood from the fingers of their left hand, which was mixed with the chicken's blood and wine. Each initiate was ordered to drink one ‘mouthful. Li then imparted the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan,” and instructed the men to reply if anyone should ask their name, “Formerly I was X, but now my name has changed to Hong.” The men were also instructed to use three fingers when picking up and receiving objects. They were to coil their queues from right to left each morning and from left to right in the afternoon. They also agreed to leave two buttons of their shirts open and to roll the top flap of their shirts inside as a recognition signal. Li Kui then paid Li Jiangsi five yuan of foreign silver.

Because Li Jiangsi was dying and knew that he could no longer transmit the society himself, he copied the poems and songs for Li Kui and told him to take over for him. He also bequeathed to him the cloth, wooden swords, and other paraphernalia of the initiation. Li Jiangsi also informed him that the Three Dots Society was originally the Increase Brothers Society, which was also called the Sanhehui (Three Unities or Triad Society), and that the poems and songs were copied from the Fifth Branch or House (*wufang*) of Wu Tiancheng.

In the eleventh lunar month of 1833, Li Kui decided to create a society to obtain cash. For this purpose, he recruited Luo Shangshu and five others, and followed the procedures outlined by his teacher Li Jiangsi for their initiation. The men then paid Li three or four yuan of foreign silver. Because their numbers were so small, Li Kui decided to form a new group every year. But fearing that local residents would be reluctant to join the well-known Sandianhui, he talked the matter over with Luo Shangshu, and they settled on the name Baojiahui for all future organizations.

On April 12, 1834 (DG 14/3/4), seventeen people acknowledged Li Kui as their teacher, and on May 3, 1835 (DG 15/4/6), twenty more followed suit. Two of these men, Zou Siqiaoban and Zou Guanfeng, were from his home town of Longquan and, like him, had come to Shaowu through the hired labor system associated with tea production. For their initiation, Li Kui killed a cock, whose blood was mixed with several drops from each initiate's left hand and wine. After they had repeated the oath, Li Kui transmitted to them the Tiandihui's secrets and changed their surnames to Hong. He further enjoined them to use three fingers when receiving or giving objects and to coil their queues from right to left in the morning and from left to right in the afternoon. During the course of his activities, Li Kui became good friends with one of his recruits, Huang Rigui, to whom he passed along the written secrets and poems of the society.⁴⁰

The second of these relatively late derivatives of the Sandianhui, the Red Coin Society (Hongqianhui), was founded in 1847 by Li Xianya (also known as Wu Xianya), a native of Jiangxi who resided in Jianyang county, Fujian. In 1846, Rao Niegou, who was also from Jiangxi, found himself without work in Jianyang and obtained help from Li Xianya. In gratitude, Rao, who had formerly been in the employ of Li Kui, the Sandianhui leader of Shaowu county, explained to Li Xianya that the Sandianhui and the Baojiahui were one and the same, and entrusted to him a book of society rhymes and songs he had obtained while working in Li Kui's house. Rao fell ill and died shortly thereafter. Three months later, Li Xianya used the book as the

authority to found two societies, one of seventy-two members and one of sixty-three. Each member acknowledged Li as his teacher, and Li, in turn, transmitted the secrets, but for the usual reasons, he saw fit to call his groups Red Coin societies. The change of name did not help. Li was soon arrested, and his book unearthed. ⁴¹

Jiangxi Societies Influenced by Religious or Vegetarian Sects

Early-eighteenth-century Jiangxi was a sect-filled milieu, permeated with a disproportionately large number of diviners, fortune-tellers, and fengshui experts. ⁴² One result was an interesting version of the Tiandihui that appeared on the Fujian-Jiangxi border in 1801. Its founder, Li Lingkui, a native of Jianning county, Shaowu prefecture, Fujian, lived in Nanchang, Jiangxi, where he ran a paper factory and had succeeded in buying the position of department vice-magistrate. There he became well acquainted with Wu Zixiang of Guiqi county, Guangxin prefecture, Jiangxi, who had founded a vegetarian society to cure ills in 1782. Li Lingkui had joined Wu's group for a fee of four yuan of silver, and in return Wu had given him a copy of a sacred text entitled *Enbenjing* (Mercy Scripture). Later that year, Li Lingkui returned to Fujian and used the book to take in more than 50 yuan of foreign silver through endeavors of his own.

Several years later, in 1801, Li Lingkui agreed to join Wu Tao of Shaowu prefecture in founding a Tiandihui branch at Star village in Chongan county, Fujian, for the purpose of avoiding extortion on the road. Shortly thereafter, word that Tiandihui members were wanted for arrest caused Li Lingkui to ponder a change of name. Remembering a sentence about *yin* and *yang* in his sacred text, he divided his society into two branches: the Yinpanjiao (Hidden Vessel Society) and the Yangpanjiao (Open Vessel Society), which were to serve as secret codes for the Tiandihui's two characters "Heaven" and "Earth."

The Yinpanjiao developed into a sect whose members copied sutras, ate a vegetarian diet, and chanted from the *Enbenjing*. Membership fees were twenty *liang*, four *qian*. All told, sixteen men joined this society in 1801 and 1802. Among them were Yao Fa and eight of his friends from Guangchang county, Jiangxi, who were recruited by Zhang Hongcun.

The group also included some men from Fujian, notably Ning Jin'ao (alias Ning Zhongcai) of Jianning and Du Shiming of Heping township, Shaowu. The first was a thirty-year-old opera performer who often sang at Shicheng, Jiangxi, and whose wife's sister had married Li Lingkui in 1798. In 1801, Li Lingkui hired Ning Jin'ao as a farmhand and encouraged him to join the Yinpanjiao organized by one of his recruits, who had a sacred text of his own. The second, Du Shiming, worked as a hired laborer in Jiangxi and served as a *junshi* (general) in Li Lingkui's Yinpanjiao. Du's principal recruit was Wu Wenchun, a native of Nanfeng, Jiangxi, who engaged in the handicraft trade of Shunchang county, Fujian. Li Jinglu of Guangchan, Jiangxi, also joined. ⁴³

The Yangpanjiao was identical to the Tiandihui, and for two yuan of foreign silver, Li Lingkui transmitted to those who joined it the society's repertoire of hand signals, rhymes, and slogans. From this first recruiting effort, the "teacher" Li Lingkui earned forty yuan of silver. ⁴⁴ Immediately thereafter, newly initiated members began recruiting on their own, but what they had in mind was robbery, not mutual aid.

In the second lunar month of 1803, Li Lingkui transmitted the Yangpanjiao to six men from Jiangxi, who lived in the vicinity of Jianning, Fujian, and who helped to spread it even more widely within the border region: Lai Dazhong (Guangchang, Jianchang prefecture), Liao Ganzhou and Li Qitian (Shicheng, Ningdu), and Li Bugao, Hu Yishu, and Wang Dingzhen (Ningdu department). As the self-proclaimed "Hou-Tang Tianzi zhuanishi" (reincarnation of Later Tang Son of Heaven), Li Lingkui revealed to the six what lay behind the society's name: "Heaven sent down a stick of incense, divided half into yin and half into yang. Anyone able to return the two into one will be able to found a dynasty." He also let slip the fact that he was plotting an uprising for the *zichou* year. ⁴⁵ In the seventh lunar month, however, Li Lingkui's adventures came to an end when he was arrested by officials in Jianning prefecture. He was executed the following month.

Far from having the desired effect, the authorities' action in fact caused the two branches of Li Lingkui's society to come together for a retaliatory strike. When Ning Jin'ao and Du Shiming of the Yinpanjiao heard about Li's arrest, they fled to Jiangxi, where they ran into the Yangpanjiao's Lai Dazhong, who told them to hide at Liao Ganzhou's. On learning the fate of his teacher, Liao sounded out other society members about staging a rebellion in revenge. He knew that in Guixi, Jiangxi, there was a man named Wang Tianzu who called himself "Milefo zhuanishi" (The reincarnation of the Maitreya Buddha). People with difficulties of one sort or another could enter his society, eat a vegetarian diet, and be saved. Liao Ganzhou went at once to Wang Tianzu, who decided to help him. Thereupon the two men prepared a flag with the words "Tang

Tianzi” to express the idea of revenge for Li Lingkui.

After Liao Ganzhou returned to Guangchang, he revealed his plan to Lai Dazhong, and together they picked November 25, 1805 (JQ 8/10/ 12), as an auspicious date for their uprising, which they planned to stage simultaneously in Guangchang, Shicheng, and Ningdu, as well as in Yaofang, on the Fujianese border. In preparation, they made additional flags and a chop, painted red strokes on white cloth turbans as a sign of mutual identification, recruited more than 1,500 men, and robbed a fort to obtain weapons. On November 14 (10/1), Liao Ganzhou (now the self-appointed *da zongguan*, “chief official,” as opposed to his captains or leaders, the *da toumu*) ordered Xu Nangeng to write a letter to Ning Jin’ao instructing him to join up with the forces at Yaofang.

Even though the actual uprising seems to have been delayed a day, to November 26, a heavy rain over the preceding five days prevented most of the participants, including Ning Jin’ao, from reaching the site at Yaofang. This left only Liao Ganzhou, Lai Dazhong, and Li Bugao with about 400 men. When, on the eve of the uprising Liao planted his flag at Yaofang, and it was snapped in two by a wind, his men deemed it an inauspicious omen and became frightened. They intended to drop the whole affair for the moment, gradually withdraw from the city, and reschedule the uprising for a later date, but by this time word of it had leaked out, Qing troops had arrived, and 591 people, many of whom were surnamed Yao, were arrested. Before the uprising even got going, it was over. Late the next day, when Ning Jin’ao reached a place called Chenfang, he learned of Liao’s defeat and fled into hiding in Jianning, Fujian.⁴⁶

With Liao Ganzhou out of the way, leadership next passed into the hands of Du Shiming. A former member of Wu Zixiang’s vegetarian sect who had used Wu’s “sacred text” to raise money on more than ten occasions, Du Shiming, on learning that Li Lingkui had inherited that text, joined the Yinpanjiao. Pressed into flight by Li Lingkui’s arrest, Du Shiming, as we saw, then hooked up with the Yangpanjiao in Jiangxi when he took refuge with Liao Ganzhou. As Liao made plans for his own uprising, he presented Du with a cloth and instructed him to go back to Shaowu to work with Wu Tao in gathering recruits. With word of Liao Ganzhou’s defeat, Du Shiming went into hiding for a second time.

On July 21, 1805 (JQ 10/6/25), he reappeared in Jianyang county, Fujian, where he had a conversation with Chen Shujin, a follower of Wu Yizuo’s, who had entered the Yangpanjiao. (Wu Yizuo was a recruiter for both the Yangpanjiao and the Yinpanjiao.)⁴⁷ During the course of this encounter, Du Shiming decided to revive his old society, and several months later, on December 31 (JQ 10/11/11), he went to Chen Shujin’s, where he joined with seven others in forming a Tiandihui unit. The men prepared a white silk cloth on which they wrote their contract and then changed their generational name to Wen.

Du Shiming reported that in Shuikou of Western township in Chongren county, Jiangxi, there was a thirty-two-year-old scion of the Ming dynasty by the name of Zhu Hongzhu. (The name Hongzhu owed to the three red bamboo trees that grew near his village at the time of his birth.) According to Du, Zhu Hongzhu was currently employed making wooden ladles for a carpenter named He and was planning an uprising that people from Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi, and Shandong all wanted to support. The signal for this uprising, he told them, was to be a foreign lantern. Du also reported that an “Elder Brother” Wan in Shandong was likewise planning to stage an uprising in the second lunar month of the following year, and that people from all over Shandong were rushing to support him as well.

Du Shiming then went off to Hekou in search of Zhu Hongzhu.⁴⁸ He was unsuccessful in this quest, from which he had returned by the following spring. On May 28, 1806 (JQ 11/4/11), he invited another twenty-five friends to join the Tiandihui and prepared a second piece of white silk with the words “*hetong*” (joined in accord). Because the “master” (*zhu*) of the society was Zhu Hongzhu, the members all took the surname Hong and the generational name Jin (Gold). Du then revealed the plans for the impending rebellion: notices telling people when to assemble would be put up in Shuikou, with those in the vegetarian sects rallying under the watchword *shan* (“good”), and the others under *he* (“harmony”). Meanwhile, Du Shiming decided to improve his financial situation by carrying out a robbery in Jiangxi. Unfortunately for him, he was caught before he could even do that much. He was arrested in June and quickly executed.⁴⁹

In 1813 and 1814, Li Laowu seems to have picked up where Li Lingkui and his associates left off by burning the horoscopes of initiates and placing the ashes in water. He also made use of plaques with the names of such Daoist gods as “Taishang laojun” and “Ziwei sanguan,” and made up characters to serve as secret references for the three words, Heaven, Earth, and Hong. He appears to have created some of these characters through a kind of planchette writing.⁵⁰

At the same time, a second society founder, Zhong Tigong, of Chongyi county, Jiangxi, used a book of Daoist incantations (*Quanfeng fushu*) as his authority to create additional units of the Increase Brothers

Society. Zhong Tigong was aware of the Increase Brothers Society in Guangdong and went to Xie Luoli's store to talk. While there, he discovered that Xie possessed a book purportedly written by Ma Chaozhu, the leader of a messianic cult in Mengtian county, Hubei, during the Qianlong era.⁵¹ On the basis of this text, Zhong Tigong and Xie Luoli decided to join forces, and on September 14, 1814 (JQ 19/8/1), they gathered five men at an empty temple for the initiation. Despite the incantations in Ma Chaozhu's book, the oath sworn by Zhong Tigong's associates was straight from the Tiandihui: "Hereafter if we have trouble, we will aid one another. No matter if soldiers come to arrest us, we will resist them with one heart." Zhong Tigong initiated another thirty-six men in a second ceremony the following month. He was on his way to Guangdong when he learned he was wanted for arrest. Cutting short his plans, he returned to his home to hide.⁵²

A considerably later Tiandihui derivative indigenous to Jiangxi, also with vague antecedents to sectarianism, was the Guanyehui, founded during the first lunar month of 1847 by Xie Sifeng of Changning. In this case, Xie Sifeng informed his close friend Ling Chengrong that there was a Tiandihui in Ganzhou whose members engaged in mutual aid to avoid being bullied and asked him to join him in a new unit. Ling agreed, and between them they recruited twenty-four others. On March 12 (DG 27/ 1/28), they gathered at Xie's home for the initiation. There, Xie announced that because in the past members of the Tiandihui had been wanted for arrest, he thought they should take a different name. The group settled on Guanye Society, after the god of loyalty and highmindedness they honored during the initiation ceremony.

During the spring of 1848, several members of the society were arrested and various plaques, pictures, and other documents were confiscated. When asked about their purpose, they testified that people from Jiangxi had entered a group called the Gold and Red Sect (Jindanjiao), which worshipped the Eternal Mother (Wusheng laomu), and at the same time had joined the Tiandihui, whose name was changed to the Guanyehui. All those who were captured admitted to being former members of the White Lotus sect. Further investigation by local officials revealed the source of the Jindanjiao to have been a man from Hengyang, Hunan, who had acknowledged Li Zirong as his teacher and had transmitted both that society and the Tiandihui during 1846 and 1847.⁵³

The Development of the Tiandihui in Guangdong Province

Like Fujian, Guangdong was a province hard hit by a population explosion in a region where "mountains were many, and fields few." It was also a rice-deficient region dependent on grain imports from Guangxi and from which, as the land-man squeeze steadily worsened during the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns, many people without fields or employment were forced to move in order to earn their livings.⁵⁴

So far as the development of the Tiandihui was concerned, Guangdong was a pivotal province, whose population received society influences direct from Fujian on the one hand, and spread them well into Guangxi and Jiangxi on the other. From its earliest days, the Tiandihui there bore a strong resemblance to its counterpart across the border in Fujian. There, too, initiates were required to pass under crossed swords and take the surname Hong. The use of the grain measure (midou) as an altarpiece during initiation ceremonies also made its way early from Fujian to Guangdong. But there were differences as well. In what were perhaps precursors of the waist certificates (*yaoping*) that would come to denote Tiandihui membership in other places, block-printed certificates attested to society membership in Guangdong, and the title most often given to society leaders was "elder brother" (*dage*), rather than "teacher" (*shi*). Even more than in Fujian, leadership credentials derived from the possession of registers (*huibu*).

As elsewhere, society recruits worshipped Heaven and Earth as "father" and "mother" and adopted the slogan "Obey Heaven and follow the Way" (Shun-Tian xingdao). And also as elsewhere, the Tiandihui units were formed not only for the purposes of providing mutual aid for followers and revenue for leaders, but for the purposes of conducting armed robbery and rebellion as well.

Although the Zhangzhou-Huizhou conduit of the Qianlong era continued to flourish, the predominant transmission patterns of the Jiaqing era took the society farther into the heart of the province through the efforts of peripatetic people like "Teacher Chen" from Tongan county, Fujian. This man, whose personal name is not documented, went to Haikang, Leizhou prefecture, Guangdong, in the twelfth lunar month of 1800 to practice physiognomy. Lin Tianshen, a local teacher from the county academy, invited Chen to his house for a reading, and during their session, Chen informed him of the advantages of joining the Tiandihui. After pointing out that Lin could expect mutual aid in times of trouble, and that he should extend three fingers as a secret code, Chen then transmitted to him the secret code "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" and gave him a document that read: "To restore the Ming: All names have the same root and return to the Hong family. Getting together, they will jointly rule the land and share the state, and thus

pass their fame into the memory of later generations.” On the back of the document (*biaowen*) was written the reign title “Tianyun xinyou nian” (The *xinyou* year of the “Heavenly revolution,” which probably referred to 1801).⁵⁵

In 1801, when Lin Tianshen found himself in financial straits, he induced a group of friends to pay 300 wen apiece to join the Tiandihui unit he formed on August 15 (JQ 6/7/7) on the outskirts of his native village of Haikang. Within days, his seven principal lieutenants became “elder brothers” in their own right, conducting initiations on the 20th, 22d, and 23d (7/12, 14, 15). Shortly thereafter, as the whole group gathered at Gaoshanpo to rob the surrounding villages, officials got wind of the plot and arrested them.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Teacher Chen’s wanderings had taken him to Xinning in Lianshan prefecture. There, in the second lunar month of 1801, Ye Shihao, a native who worked as a hired laborer, invited Chen to his house for a reading. As usual, Chen took the opportunity to talk up the merits of Tiandihui membership and gave Ye a *huibu*. Later, in the eighth month, as Ye and his friends fell on hard times, Ye used the book to form a Tiandihui of his own. He and his principal lieutenants set November 15 (JQ 6/10/10) as the day to form a “universal” or “aggregate society” (*zonghui*) for the purpose of committing robbery, but they were captured before their endeavor could succeed.⁵⁷ (“Universal” or “aggregate societies” came into being when several leaders mobilized their groups for a common purpose such as robbery and made one of their number the overall leader, usually the man most responsible for introducing or transmitting the society within their area.)

From earliest times, oath books (*mengshu*) and other written documents were employed in Guangdong as credentials of leadership. For example, on April 24, 1800 (JQ 5/4/1), when Qiu Daqin of Yangjiang county founded his society, he used an oath book given to him by He Qichang of Zhangzhou, who had been on the road in Guangdong. The book contained such phrases as “Restore the Ming” (*huifu Mingzuo*) and noted that, at the Shaolin Temple in Henan, He Qichang had run into Zhu Hongzhu, who had invited him to join the society and transmitted to him the oath.⁵⁸

Once the book was in his possession, Qiu Daqin put his name to the preface and conclusion, thus implying that it was his own work, and also added the words, “The flying flag will bring victory, and when horses with riders arrive, there will be success.” But his initiation ceremony was the standard one, with recruits crawling under crossed swords, drinking a mixture of blood and wine, and burning their oaths. And in what was also by then a well-established pattern, Qiu and his subordinates founded similar societies for the purpose of creating a universal organization to engage in robbery and *xiedou*.⁵⁹

Similarly, Chen Li’nan, a native of Tong’an county who had joined the Tiandihui of Chen Piao xue in Fujian, had obtained an oath book from his mentor. Later, when he experienced hard times in Fujian, Chen Li’nan decided to try his luck as a hired laborer in Guangdong but, unable to find work after a month’s try in Dongguan county, he decided to form a society for the purpose of committing armed robbery. His followers paid Chen Li’nan 300 wen each and gathered on March 8 (JQ 6/1/24) in Lu village for their initiation.

During the ceremony, Chen Li’nan took out his oath book. Li Daozhu and the others who joined took the surname Hong and committed themselves to worshipping Heaven as “father” and Earth as “mother.” They then swore an oath and mixed their blood. After all had crawled under a knife Chen held over their heads, they acknowledged him as their leader (*huishou*), burned their oaths, and drank wine. Because their number was too small for any thought of robbery, Chen ordered Li and his companions to induct new members into organizations of their own. Approximately seventy more members were promptly recruited from the surrounding villages and initiated between March 10 and March 18. By the 28th (JQ 6/2/15), the aggregate group was ready to begin its activities, but its members were arrested shortly thereafter.⁶⁰

Two Guangdong counties where the Tiandihui made especially heavy inroads were Boluo and Guishan. According to the Liangguang governor-general Ji Qing, Boluo county had many immigrants from Zhangzhou (Fujian) and Jiaying (Guangdong) who constantly fought with the natives over water rights. For this reason, people on both sides formed mutual aid societies for self-protection, and many were wounded or killed as a result of the hui activity and the leaders’ desire for revenge.⁶¹

Many of these groups were almost certainly affiliated with the Tiandihui, which in 1802 was said to have had between 10,000 and 20,000 members and 2,000 or 3,000 leaders in Boluo and Guishan counties alone. Though these figures should not be taken too literally, the membership was undoubtedly large. The result was that Boluo, Guishan, and Yongan counties played host to the first Tiandihui uprising in Guangdong province in the fall of that year.⁶²

The insurrection was instigated by the head of the Increase Brothers Society in Boluo county, Chen Lanjisi

(1776—1802.). Chen had been building his organization for two years, and by 1802 he had a host of followers. With substantial numbers behind him (if not the more than 10,000 people indicated in the sources), he decided to raise the standard of rebellion, dispatched lieutenants to various places to obtain saltpeter (for gunpowder) and weapons, and manufactured ten cloth flags with the slogan “Shun-Tian xingdao” (Obey Heaven and follow the Way).

On September 4, 1802 (JQ 7/8/8), Chen mustered his Tiandihui forces at Yangshi Mountain. Each participant wore a red turban for identification. Chen Lanjisi’s father, decked out in yellow (the imperial color), sat at the head of the assembly, with Chen standing at his side. One after another, the rebels came forward to kneel and kowtow in front of Chen’s father and to address him as “Lao da wang” (Old King). Chen himself was invested as the “Great King” (Da wang), and others were named “generalissimos” (*yuanshuai*) and “vanguards” (*xianfeng*).

Taking advantage of a temporary low in the county’s troop contingents, the rebels launched their movement a week later, on September 11 (JQ 7/8/15), with attacks on several villages, including Tuguawei, Liujiawei, Wunitang, Xianggang, and Longhuahui. Governor-general Ji Qing mobilized 550 troops under Li Hansheng and Hu Junhong, but because these soldiers had to be brought in from near and far, this force could not be amassed immediately. Reinforcements were soon sent out by the governor and Tartar general, and the first major battle occurred on September 22–23 (JQ 7/8/26–27), when the rebels, now flying a single red flag with a gold dragon, were attacked in their mountain fortress by Sun Quanmou from the west and Li Hansheng from the east. An army under General Huang Biao arrived later that month to precipitate a campaign in which the Qing burned down the rebels’ wooden palisade and captured more than 300 men. Thereupon, Chen and some of the others retreated to Houshan.

In the next major battle, on October 2 (JQ 7/9/6), Chen Lanjisi, with several thousand remaining supporters, made a stand at Luofu Mountain. When their stockades were broken, the rebels were forced to retreat. The provincial military commander-in-chief, Sun Quanmou, followed in pursuit and attacked at night with fire. As the rebel army scattered, another 300 participants were apprehended. On October 15, the twenty-six-year-old leader himself was captured on the border between Boluo and Zengcheng at Zhou Mountain, and the uprising ended there.

Meanwhile, trouble had been brewing in Guishan county, where two local Tiandihui leaders, Chen Yaben and Cai Buyun, the one a native, the other an immigrant from Zhangpu, Fujian, had decided to follow Chen Lanjisi’s lead. On May 12, 1802 (JQ 7/4/11), Chen Yaben had gone to Cai Buyun’s to confer about the possibility of forming a Tiandihui unit because he had heard that members in Fujian did not cheat or ridicule one another. He also pointed out, not incidentally, that this was a means of obtaining silver. Cai agreed, and the men recruited sixteen others to join their society.

On May 16 (JQ 7/4/15), they gathered at Chen Yaben’s for the initiation. For it, the men prepared a cloth flag with the slogan “Shun-Tian xingdao,” and each initiate received a piece of cloth as proof of membership. Because their numbers were so few and others were afraid to join, staging a rebellion at the moment was out of the question. Nevertheless, Chen and Cai clearly had this in mind when they proclaimed themselves “Great King” (*Da wang*) and “Great Generalissimo” (*Da yuanshuai*), respectively; designated their initiates as generalissimos and vanguards of the north, south, east, and west; and began manufacturing weapons and recruiting participants in the neighboring villages.

Gradually, the two succeeded in attracting several hundred followers, enough they thought to carry out robberies in such villages as Renshan, Baimanghua, and Pingshan, domain of the Ox Head Society (Niutouhui), a protective association organized by the local landlords and well-to-do. This group (which took its name from the fact that the members had the means to till their fields with oxen) added to its strength by hiring township braves (*xiangyong*) for its ceaseless battles with the Tiandihui. On September 22 (JQ 7/8/15), Chen Yaben and Cai Buyun launched an allout attack in Ox Head territory. But word of the enterprise quickly spread, and the rebels were apprehended and executed.⁶³

The Tiandihui uprising in Yongan also grew out of local quarrels with the Ox Head Society. In August 1802, Wen Dengyuan recruited five others, including Zeng Qinghao, to join a Tiandihui for mutual aid. In September, news of the group’s organization reached the head of Qingxi’s local Ox Head Society, a Student by Purchase of the Fourth Class named Lan. Aware of the uprising in Boluo and fearful that the Tiandihui in his own county would rise up too, Lan ordered members of his society to capture the Tiandihui leader Wen Dengyuan and turn him over to the county authorities. Shortly after his arrest, Wen Dengyuan died in jail.

In late September or early October, after the Boluo uprising had been suppressed, one of the leaders made his way to Qingxi and encouraged the new Tiandihui leader there, Guan Yuelong, to pick up the torch.

Guan, backed by Zeng Qinghao and Lai Dongbao, agreed to mount an uprising, and calling themselves “Great Kings,” they issued a proclamation on October 22 (JQ 7/9/26). Within days, they had mustered some 2,000 to 3,000 men at Tianzizhang, eighty li from the county seat, and dividing this force into three armies, launched an attack on Qingxi, Huangtang, and Zhongpuwei.

Governor-general Ji Qing promptly dispatched troops under Sun Quanmou and Hu Junhong, but they did not fare well in battles with the rebels on October 28 and 29 (JQ 7/10/2–3). With the rebel army continuing to grow, the governor-general feared that the government forces would be cut off and asked the emperor to send reinforcements from Jiangxi. This request so angered the emperor that in the end only 500 Manchu bannermen from Guangzhou were sent in to help.

As it turned out, the governor-general’s fears were unjustified, for on November 1 (10/6), Sun Quanmou brought his 2,000–man army within thirty li of the rebel headquarters and there defeated Zeng Qinghao, who surrendered with a large contingent of the rebel force. At this, the movement quickly collapsed, and the rest of the participants were either captured or surrendered of their own accord.

In the meantime, Guan Yuelong had not forgotten Lan’s hand in the capture of the Tiandihui leader Wen Dengyuan. During the uprising, the rebels took care to burn the homes of Student Lan and a Provincial Graduate also named Lan. Not surprisingly, trouble continued in Yongnan well after the suppression of the rebellion as members of the local Ox Head Society took their revenge, and the Tiandihui replied in kind. To put an end to the violence, the government sent out troops to pacify the area by building ninety mountain stockards.

But the Tiandihui of Tielongzhang Mountain refused to be pacified. A contingent of 700 or 800 men led by Huang Yacheng and three others made their way to the mountain stockade and in front of it planted a flag with the words, “When officials repress, people rebel.” They fortified the exits and entrances with three cannon and more than 100 fowling pieces; designated Huang Yacheng and Wen Yali as their “Great Kings,” and four others as their “generals” (junshi) and “generalissimos” (yuanshuai); and spread word that if government troops came on with cannon, they would strike back with their hands.

By this time, Grand Secretary Nayancheng, dispatched to the scene as an imperial commissioner, had informed the emperor that the rebels were encamped in a place easily defended and hard to attack. Unhappy with what he saw as Nayancheng’s “fear-of-difficulty attitude,” the emperor ordered him to exterminate the rebels. At the beginning of the twelfth lunar month, Nayancheng sent four runners to the rebels’ encampment, exhorting them to surrender. The men were summarily put to death, leaving Nayancheng with no choice but to attack. He ordered 500 soldiers to dig out fortifications to prevent the rebel army from escaping and sent out about 3,500 others to move in from all directions. Early in the lunar new year, Sun Quanmou arrived to take command of the operations, and a major battle ensued. The rebels defended themselves with stones and cannon, but in the end they were forced to retreat behind their defenses. From this point, their momentum quickly ebbed, and the next morning as the army came at them from all sides, their movement fell apart, and they were easily defeated.⁶⁴

The uprisings in Boluo, Guishan, and Yongnan counties cost the Qing government nearly 360,000 taels to suppress and had alarmed it into trying to prevent any further Tiandihui activity by reviving the old “mutual surveillance,” or *baojia*, organizations.

One additional area of Tiandihui activity in Guangdong during the early nineteenth century was at sea, where society members occasionally acted in concert with the pirates who were then preying along much of the South China coast. It is not clear to what extent the pirates of these early years actually belonged to secret societies, and there are few examples of people known to have been active in both circles simultaneously. But there is ample evidence that society members served pirates by keeping them abreast of what was taking place in Macao and Canton, procuring goods for them, helping them dispose of their booty, assisting them in the establishment of the protection rackets that supported their confederation, and joining them for raids on shore.⁶⁵ It is also certain that when circumstances became too dangerous on land, at least some society members escaped to the seas to join pirate bands. Pirate ranks in Guangdong were inflated, for instance, by many refugees of the Boluo rebellion, something that did not escape the attention of the Liangguang governor-general, who reported in 1804: “We have secretly investigated the Tiandihui and indeed there are instances of conspiracies with the pirates.”⁶⁶

One specific example of pirate-society interaction occurred in the aftermath of the Tiandihui leader Lin Tianshen’s failed robbery attempt of September 12, 1801. As he and ninety-nine of his followers were being rounded up and arrested, Fu Laohong of Haikang, Guangdong, managed to escape to Donghai, where he entered the fleet of the pirate leader Wushi Er. Seeing that Fu was a man of intelligence, Wushi Er quickly

commissioned him as his “general” (*diansi junshi*) and allowed him to give orders on board ship. Thereafter, Fu Laohong masterminded the joint attack by the fleets of Wushi Er and Donghai Bo on two ocean junks and twenty-six salt vessels. Fu was also responsible for keeping track of the proceeds of the pirates’ protection racket against the salt fleets and dividing up and allocating the pirates’ booty.⁶⁷ An even more telling example of the cooperation of the two groups is found in the agreement forged on September 19, 1804 (JQ 9/8/16) between the pirate leader Zheng Wuzhu and the society member Cai Yatang to launch a raid on Haifeng. Cai recruited sixty-five would-be robbers and initiated them in the usual fashion. The combined pirate-society force carried out its mission on February 1, 1805 (JQ 10/1/2).⁶⁸

Let us turn, finally, to still another development in Guangdong, the appearance of the Tiandihui under a name that probably gave rise to the familiar “Triads,” a term that continues to be widely used throughout much of Asia as a synonym for the Tiandihui in general, but especially for its important derivative, the Three Unities Society (Sanhehui).

What was to become a truly powerful group began modestly enough. On January 4, 1812 (JQ 16/11/20), a friend of a humble pole-carrier from Shunde county named Yan Guiqiu and two others came to Yan’s house for a visit. Yan complained that he lived alone and was being bullied by people, and told them that he was hoping to form a society for mutual aid. His friend, Yan Peiyu, and the other two men agreed to the project and set out to recruit additional members. They had little trouble finding candidates, it seems, for only five days later, on January 9, sixty-six recruits gathered at an uncultivated place outside the village, paid 200 wen each for the privilege of acknowledging Yan Guiqiu as their elder brother, and in return received the secret formulas of the Tiandihui, along with instructions to go out and find recruits of their own. The men adopted the name Sanhehui for their new organization.

Yan did not stop there. In the course of his career, he brought 151 people into the society, and after each initiation, his disciples quickly began founding units of their own.⁶⁹ As a result, the Sanhehui steadily spread throughout much of South China, until by 1831 it encompassed five or six provinces and was divided into five houses or branches (*fang*). Each of these branches, of which Fujian was the eldest, Guangdong the second, Yunnan the third, Huguang the fourth, and Zhejiang the fifth, was headed by a *toumu* (“captain” or “head”) and had its own colored banner.⁷⁰

The Development of the Tiandihui in Guangxi Province

Guangxi was a rice-producing region that exported much of its surplus across the border into Guangdong. Along the water routes, rice prices were low, especially when compared with those in Guangdong. At the same time, land was still available in the province, with the result that when rice became too dear in Guangdong, many of the hardest hit would pack up their bags and move across the border. Other settlers occasionally wandered in from Fujian and Hunan as well, and along with them came their societies. With rare exceptions, what they brought in was the Increase Brothers Society (Tiandihui).

In its Guangxi form, the Increase Brothers Society, whose presence in the province first came to the attention of Qing officials in 1806, was much like its counterparts in other provinces. Its leaders were referred to as first, second, and third “elder brothers,” who sometimes took their guidance from persons of influence, or “teachers” (*shifu*). The initiation ceremony, as elsewhere, featured grain measures (*midou*) filled with flags and other paraphernalia, plaques of Ti Xi or some deity on the altar, the burning of incense, the “crossing of the bridge,” the ritual burning of membership lists as offerings to the gods, the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan,” and the imbibing of cock’s blood and wine.

But the Guangxi societies added a few touches of their own. For example, initiates sometimes passed through bamboo doors or gates instead of under cloth bridges or crossed swords, and occasionally even had to jump through fire. And it was here that membership documents in the form of waist certificates (*yaoping*) made their appearance, as did the practice of bestowing on new members such tokens of affiliation as paper fans or straw sandals. Here, too, leaders seemed to buy their titles openly, with the heaviest contributors becoming either “elder brothers” (*dage*) or “universal elder brothers” (*zong dage*) of aggregated organizations. As in Guangdong, registers (*huibu*) served as the authority for members to found societies of their own. In fact, as we shall see below, the earliest surviving Tiandihui *huibu* comes from Guangxi.

The most noteworthy characteristic of society formation in the province was the extent to which migrants were involved. Many of the earliest societies were founded by Hakkas from Guangdong.⁷¹ Moreover, one of the strongest transmission paths from that province must have led from Nanhai county, Guangzhou prefecture, which consistently over time furnished the leadership core of societies in Shanglin, Laibin, Gongcheng, Pingnan, Teng, and Yishan counties.

The founder of one of the first societies (if not the first) in Shanglin, for example, was Zhou Zongsheng, a

native of Nanhai county who had arrived in 1806 to work as a hired laborer. In Shanglin, he became well acquainted with Li Gui, of Xichang county, Sichuan, with whom he decided to form a Tiandihui for mutual protection on the road. On June 18, 1807 (JQ 12/5/13), the two held an initiation for thirty other immigrants (all from Guangdong), who gathered for that purpose at an empty God of War temple in Dongshanling, Shanglin county. Each recruit paid 200 wen so that Li Gui could purchase chicken, wine, food, and incense.

During the initiation, the men acknowledged Li Gui as their “elder brother” and Zhou Zongsheng as their “second brother.” Li then said that because the name of the society contained both “Heaven” and “Earth,” he would divide his followers into Heaven and Earth groups. He would head the Heaven group himself, and Zhou Zongsheng would command the other. Li Gui wrote each member’s name on a piece of red paper and then had them draw lots to determine their hierarchical rank. After this, Li and Zhou stood in front of the altar while the initiates followed one another in kneeling to take their oaths. Each man drew a few drops of blood from a finger, blended it with chicken blood, and drank the mixture down. Li Gui then transmitted to them the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan” and enjoined the new members not to violate their oaths.⁷²

Another society founder from Nanhai was inspired not by the need for self-protection but by a desire for revenge. In the seventh lunar month of 1804, Zhong Hezhao, who worked as a hired laborer in Shanglin county, and another Zhong Yamao (not a kinsman) went north to Yishan county in Qingyuan prefecture to buy saltpeter privately from Song Qing, an official in charge of its handling. They then intended to turn around and sell it for a profit. But when Song Qing did not agree to the deal, a quarrel broke out. Song Qing captured Zhong Hezhao and took him to the county authorities. This made the Zhongs exceedingly angry. But badly as they wanted revenge, they had to bide their time. Finally, in the second lunar month of 1808, Yamao and Hezhao, who had evidently been released, conceived the idea of forming an Increase Brothers Society from the people who gathered at the store where Hezhao lived in Shanglin county. One avowed purpose of the society was to enable members to receive mutual aid and avoid being insulted on the road. But what the two had most in mind was banding together for robbery and revenge. Nineteen men ultimately entered the group and acknowledged Zhong Hezhao as their “teacher” (shifu).⁷³

Two other Nanhai migrants, Yan Chao and Yan Yagui, founded societies in Guangxi for the avowed purpose of staging a rebellion. On February 27, 1808 (JQ 13/2/2), Yan Chao, who peddled goods from a carrying pole, met up with the horse-seller Yan Yagui at Chen Laojiu’s restaurant in Laibin. Because they were staying at the same place, bore the same surname, and were from the same county in Guangdong, the two men soon became confidants. Yan Chao, who possessed a copy of the illegal “Taoyuange” (Peach Garden Song), urged Yan Yagui to enter the Tiandihui and lent the document to him. On reading the “Taoyuange” and discovering that it was full of “rebellious” words, Yan Yagui asked about their origin. Yan Chao replied that his copy had been made by six men, including Hong Qisheng, who lived at the foot of Ding Mountain in Shicheng county, Guangdong,⁷⁴ and informed him that these men were plotting an uprising. If Yan Yagui was interested, he must go recruiting, Yan Chao told him. But he must go about it cautiously, using Tiandihui membership as a pretext for his activities. Yan Yagui was to tell his recruits about mutual aid in times of trouble and how belonging to the Tiandihui could help them protect their homes and families but was not to say anything about the ideas contained in the “Peach Garden Song” or discuss the planned rebellion with anyone but the elder brothers of his new organizations. Yan Yagui agreed, and Yan Chao then made a copy of the “Peach Garden Song,” revealed the secret code “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan,” formed a bridge from crossed knives, and had Yan Yagui crawl beneath it. The men swore a blood oath, and Yan Chao presented Yan Yagui with a white fan, called the *qingfeng* (“fresh breeze”). On it were written four “secret,” and hence indecipherable, code words.

Setting out on his own, Yan Yagui became the teacher (shifu) of a society of twenty-three, which was founded at an old temple in Naqian village, Laibin county, in the fourth lunar month of 1808. Meanwhile, Yan Chao continued founding other societies and encouraging his principal adherents to do likewise. But it was all a ruse, for Hong Qisheng never led an uprising, at Ding Mountain or anywhere else.⁷⁵

In fact, written documents played a large role in the transmission process in Guangxi, perhaps because the Tiandihui was relatively late taking hold there.⁷⁶ The oldest Tiandihui huibu in the archives was unearthed in Lanzhou and sent to the emperor in 1811. It was the property of still another immigrant from Guangdong, Yao Dagao, a native of Pingyuan who moved to Wuyuan county, Si’en prefecture, to earn a living sewing.

In the fifth lunar month of 1810, Yao met Wu Tonghui, and the two men commiserated with each other about their mutual poverty. Yao told Wu about the Increase Brothers societies in Guangdong organized for

mutual aid, and Wu agreed to join if a unit was formed. Soon after, on July 4 (JQ 15/6/3), fifteen were initiated at Wu Tonghui's house. Each initiate paid Yao 1,200 wen for incense, chicken, and wine. After the men selected Yao Dagao as their "elder brother," and Lin Guoxiang as their "second brother," Yao gave them the traditional secret code. He and Lin Guoxiang then held crossed knives under which the new members had to pass. The men sacrificed a cock whose blood was mixed with wine and drunk. Yao then closed the ceremony by giving each man a piece of red cloth stamped from a triangular seal, with the caution to conceal it well.

Yao held similar ceremonies until the time of his arrest. He died before Qing officials could thoroughly interrogate him, but the huibu was discovered at the home of his subordinate Jian Xingfu. The date of the book's composition and whether Yao himself was its author are unknown.⁷⁷

Before long, clever fellows in Guangxi had invented new schemes to induce people to join. In 1811, Huang Shike, a native of Fujian who resided in Nanping and traveled frequently to Yong'an department (Guangxi) on business, decided to join a friend in founding an Increase Brothers unit for the purpose of committing robbery. To help persuade others to join, his son Biao had the bright idea of changing his name to Zhu Biao and passing himself off as a scion of the Ming dynasty.⁷⁸

For Su Xianming of Guangdong, issuing waist certificates (yaoping) was the ticket to leadership. In the second lunar month of 1808, Gu Zhisheng ran into Su at the Danzhu market of Pingnan county, Xunzhou prefecture, in south-central Guangxi. After discovering that Su was from the same place in Guangdong as he, Gu told his new acquaintance that because of the insults he was subjected to as he tried to sell medicine in Guangxi, he was going to have to consider some other means of livelihood. At this, Su Xianming suggested that Gu become a member of the Increase Brothers Society, where he could "earn" money for his own use by joining with others in robbing goods for profit. Su also informed him that in times of trouble he could count on the assistance of his fellow members.

When Gu Zhisheng agreed to join, Su Xianming gave him the secret code "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" and a waist certificate of red cloth that was inscribed with five characters to which a water radical had been affixed. For the initiation, Su built a "door" of two bamboo strips over a midou filled with rice and covered with a red cloth, inserted incense into the midou, and then ordered Gu and his fellow initiates to pass through the door and take their oaths as he and the "teacher" (*shifu*) stood alongside it, knives upraised. That done, the inductees each paid Su Xianming 516 wen and were given a mixture of chicken blood and wine to drink. Later, in the fourth lunar month, when Gu founded a society of his own with thirty-three members, he modeled his initiation ceremony, which was held in an old temple in Pingnan county, on the one he had undergone, following the practices that had been transmitted to him by Su Xianming.⁷⁹

An additional product of the old Nanhai (Guangdong) emigration network resulted in more elaboration of the rituals—and one of the few societies in Guangxi to take a different name. The so-called Loyalty Society (Zhongyihui) emerged in Gongcheng county, Pingluo prefecture (just upriver from Zhaoqing and Wuzhou, Fujian) in 1815. It was largely the creation of Liang Laosan, of Nanhai, who earned his living in Guangxi, and his relative Liang Laojiu. In the tenth lunar month of that year, Liang Laosan ran into Li Yonghuai of Hengyang county, Hengzhou prefecture, Hunan, who peddled goods in Gongcheng county. When Li spoke to Liang about the difficulty of being on his own without any support, Liang replied that he too was alone but knew of an organization within the county called the Zhongyihui whose members could defend themselves against bullying. Liang Laosan also informed Li that those who paid the most money to join would become "elder brothers" and would be given pieces of red cloth authorizing them to establish societies of their own as a means of making money. Moreover, once a society had formed, anyone who made a large contribution would be designated a "universal elder brother" (*zong dage*) and receive a triangular paper flag with the word "commander" (*ling*) written on it. If any member became ill, the others would pay 108 wen apiece to help him out. Liang finished by indicating that his kinsman Laojiu was just in the midst of forming a brotherhood and invited Li Yonghuai to join.

Li accepted the invitation, and on November 11 (JQ 20/10/11), he and eleven others gathered at an empty temple in Gongcheng county for the initiation. There, Liang Laosan set up an altar, wrote the words "Loyalty Hall" (Zhongyitang) on a sheet of paper, and pasted it on the side of the altar. Atop the altar, he placed an image of Guandi, the God of War, a lamp, and a midou, then inserted five red flags into the midou and used a bit of oil to light the lamp. Next he formed three bamboo slats into hoops and ordered six men whom he had already initiated to stand alongside these with iron rulers or daggers in their hands. With these preliminaries out of the way, he identified himself as a "universal elder brother" (*zong dage*), wrapped his head in a red cloth, into which paper flowers had been inserted, draped his body in a long red cloth,

took up position at one side of the altar, and instructed Li Yonghuai to carry another red cloth and follow Liu Lao'er and others in crawling through the three hoops, or "passes." Next, the initiates were ordered to jump over a burning fire and say that they were crossing a mountain of fire. After this, they had to draw blood from the middle finger of one hand, add it to a mixture of chicken blood and wine, and drink. Their names were then written on a piece of paper, which was placed on the altar, along with the paper flags and hoops, and burned. Thereafter, passing through hoops, or bamboo "passes," became an indispensable part of each initiation ceremony staged by Liang Laosan, Liang Laojiu, and their disciples.⁸⁰

As time went on, the ceremonies of the various leaders in Guangxi became ever more complex. For example, in the fifth lunar month of 1819, when Tang Zhi'e of Hunan formed his society in Guanyang county (in the north, just across the border from Hunan), he added a new twist to the hoop ritual by placing a pan of water under each of the three "passes" and having the initiates throw a stick of incense into the water as they knelt at the entrance and intoned, "If one has loyalty and righteousness, he may pass through the 'gate,' but if he is without loyalty or righteousness, then the knife will fall and kill him." After passing through all three gates, the initiates reached a hall or room with an altar constructed of three tables, onto which had been placed a container of unhulled rice bearing a gold-colored commander's (ling) flag. A sheet of paper with eight words written on it was pasted to the side of the altar. One person sat atop the altar and another stood at the side. Both wore red turbans and held either brushes or rulers. A third person led the initiates into the room and ordered them to kneel on the floor. Each was asked to confirm that he was willing to join the society and was given to understand that refusal meant a thrashing with the rulers. Then, writing their names and the amount of money they had contributed, the recruits downed a mixture of blood drawn from their fingers and wine. Finally, after the selection of a "venerable teacher" (*laoshi*), each member received a new pair of straw sandals and a paper fan before departing.⁸¹

To conclude this section on Guangxi, let me quote two contemporary accounts that reveal much about the nature of Tiandihui membership. The first is from the testimony of the society member Tang Mingsan in 1811:

According to the rules of the Tiandihui, people can form separate societies at various places. Each society may have from seven or eight to as many as thirty or forty members, most of whom don't know each other. Even I myself don't know how many. I mean, since most of us who joined the society at the same time didn't know each other, how could we possibly know the exact total number? But if we run into someone on the road and hear him use the "*ben zi*" in speech [i.e., the word Hong], or see him reach out with three fingers, then we know he, too, is a society member and we can speak of society affairs.... When we joined the society, the teacher told us that we could benefit from each other's help; that is, whenever we had problems, other people would come to help us even though we didn't know them.⁸²

The second quotation comes from the Liangguang Governor-general Ruan Yuan, who made this observation in 1821:

We have noted that the nature of the people in Guangxi is plain and simple. Because Guangxi borders on Guangdong, Hunan, and Yunnan, "floating people" [migrants] from outside the province come in to till the land, and the bad grows together with the good. As a result, they induce the [floating] people to form Increase Brothers societies. Villagers are then persuaded to join as well because they are isolated. They join in hopes that they will receive assistance in times of trouble. Or, if they are from flourishing households, they join out of fear of being robbed, to protect their homes. At first these offenders [fei] only extorted money to use. They followed [the ceremonies] in old books handed down for more than a century to establish their own registers [huibu] and waist certificates [yaoping]. They transmitted secret codes and referred to individuals as "elder brother" or "teacher." If they know that the crimes of the Tiandihui are [to be] severely punished, then they change the name to Old People's Society [Laorenhui] or something else. Whenever they have several score of followers, they form a new unit, but there are no cases of societies with more than 100 people. One person may belong to two or three societies, so that their numbers increase rapidly. They [members] get together to commit robbery and are also joined by many clerks and soldiers who hope that the societies' screen [protection] will keep them from being arrested. Their intention is only to obtain wealth to use; they are not plotters of illegalities [rebellion], but their intention to incite good people to rob is a local evil.⁸³

The Development of the Tiandihui in Hunan, Yunnan, and Guizhou Provinces

The Tiandihui was transmitted to Hunan, Yunnan, and Guizhou provinces by migrants from Fujian and Guangxi, as well as by Hakka from Guangdong. But it did not appear in these areas until relatively late and was not nearly so pervasive as in Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Jiangxi. Nevertheless, these three provinces, like the others, contributed their share of new rituals and titles to Tiandihui lore. There, “Five Ancestors” plaques graced the altars of most initiation ceremonies, and jumping over fire was *de rigueur*. The one unifying element, though, was the revealing of the society’s most essential secret, the slogan “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan.” Leaders in this southwestern region tended to be called “masters” (*xiansheng*) or “fathers” (*da ye*), rather than “elder brothers” or “teachers,” as in the areas to the north.

Hunan

By Zhuang Jifa’s description, the Hunan of the pre-Taiping period was characterized above all by immigrants and lawlessness. To it flocked the dispossessed of Jiangxi, Guangxi, Guangdong, and Sichuan, seeking to till the hills or to work in the salt and iron mines or paper factories. More often than not, they were Hakka or “guest people,” who settled down, married, and constantly quarreled with indigenous residents intolerant of their customs and lifestyles. It was an explosive situation on which the Increase Brothers Society fed once it got started in the early nineteenth century. The society made its greatest inroads in Jianghua county (Yongzhou prefecture) and Dao Zhou (department).

The Tiandihui reached the province in 1813, when Huang Delong, a Hunanese who had left his home in Liuyang county to take up residence in Jianghua, met Zhang Changme of Guangdong. As the two discussed their poverty and feelings of isolation, they decided to organize an Increase Brothers Association for purposes of mutual aid. Zhang told Huang that back in Guangdong, societies had secret sentences and gave out “chopped” silk documents as proof of membership. Thereupon the two men carved a chop of their own with the four characters “share the same name ‘Hong’ and join together” and worked out their entrance fees. A payment of 500 wen would entitle a recruit to an initiation ceremony featuring the burning of incense, the sacrifice of a cock, and the drinking of cock’s blood and wine. For an additional 108 wen, the man would get a piece of red silk stamped with the leaders’ “chop” authorizing him to go out and “raise” money on his own. On the appointed day, thirty-five men gathered at Huang Delong’s and, after electing him their “elder brother,” crawled beneath crossed swords, swore an oath that was burned before the gods, and sacrificed a chicken. As always, the secret “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan” was transmitted, and those who had paid the additional fee received their silk certificates.⁸⁴

Thereafter, the movement flourished in Jianghua, perpetuated by Su Feng, another immigrant from Guangdong, and Liu Donggui, who between them founded several societies in 1815 and 1816. Their initiations, as many elsewhere had come to do, featured bamboo arches flanked by red-turbaned leaders with crossed knives or swords. At one of his initiations, Su Feng reminded recruits of the costs of deviation: “In the center are some five-color fruit seeds; some people try to protect them, others try to eat them. If you have loyalty and righteousness, you will be happy and eat them; if not, you will be destroyed.”⁸⁵ From Jianghua, the Tiandihui was spread into Dao Zhou by Jiang Huakai, a native who had taken Pan Qihui of Lianzhou, Guangdong, as his teacher.⁸⁶

Yunnan

Hakkas from Guangxi and Guangdong were also instrumental in spreading the Tiandihui to Yunnan and, as a result, the ceremonies bore a strong resemblance to those of the Liangguang. Tiandihui members were most numerous in Nanjai, Baoning county, and included men from Sichuan and Guizhou, as well as Yunnan and the Liangguang.

In 1812 and 1813, Lin Runcai, a native of Wengyuan county, Guangdong, founded Heaven and Earth societies in Shizong (now Tanfeng) county. (Shizong was just across the border from both Guangxi and Guizhou.) Lin had been an active member back home, introduced to the society by his adopted father, a man named Wang from Gaoyao county, Guangdong, who had given him a red cloth inscribed with eighteen code words and taught him the Tiandihui’s secret slogan. The last Wang’s “son” saw of him was in 1796, when Lin had moved to Xilong county, Guangxi, to engage in commerce. But he had held on to the cloth, and many years later, in the second lunar month of 1811, he encountered Zhong Mingyang of Jiaying, Guangdong, who paid him a visit and recognized it as a “souvenir” of the Tiandihui. After conferring, the two men decided to join with their friend Zhang Xiaoyuan (also of Guangdong) in reviving the old society. They followed through on their plan in the tenth lunar month. Shortly after, Zhang Xiaoyuan, fearing arrest, fled over the border into Yunnan to hide. In the first lunar month of 1812, when Lin and Zhong heard that their friend had founded a society in Shicong county, they decided to follow suit. A few months

later, on April 10 (JQ 17/2/29), they initiated twenty recruits in Yunnan.

During the ceremony, Lin took out a register with red words and white paper and carefully recorded each person's name and age. The group chose him to be its "master" (*xiansheng*) and also elected a "great father" (*da ye*). Zhong was in charge of setting up a Five Ancestors' plaque and overseeing the initiates as they passed under crossed swords, jumped over fire, and took their oaths and burned them. The members then smeared their blood and received the society's secrets.⁸⁷

An Increase Brothers Society, with similar rituals, was formed by Yang Hantou in southeast Yunnan. A native of Qujiang county (now Mapa), Nanxiong prefecture, northern Guangdong, he had belonged to an Increase Brothers Society in his home province led by a man named Wang of Gaoyao county. Subsequently, in the tenth lunar month of 1815, Yang had moved to Wenshan county, Kaihua prefecture, Yunnan, located in what is now part of the Miao autonomous region. Realizing that the local villagers would be easy to take advantage of, Yang Hantou set out to organize his own branch of the society, and in the second lunar month of 1816, he recruited twenty-seven people, who paid one silver liang or its equivalent in money, rice, or wood to join. Whether all did so willingly is doubtful. Yang Hantou reportedly provided extra incentive for joining by threatening to rob the homes of the recalcitrant.

Yang Hantou, in his role of "great father," held his initiation ceremony on the night of March 26 (JQ 21/2/28). For this occasion, "Master" (*xiansheng*) Zhu Turong made a Five Ancestors' tablet to place on the altar. In front of it were the standard crossed knives, and underneath a small fire pit was hollowed out. The initiates had to crawl under the knives, jump over the fire, and swear an oath in front of Yang. After their names were recorded on a list and duly burned in offering to the gods, they drank a cupful of chicken blood and wine. Each man then received a piece of red cloth and agreed to wear his queue hanging down on the left as a secret signal. Yang also displayed the *huibu* he owned, a document with black words on white paper that enjoined members to be of one heart and to help one another in times of trouble.⁸⁸ Similar ceremonies continued to be held in Yunnan well into the Daoguang era.⁸⁹

Guizhou

The Tiandihui also appeared relatively late in Guizhou, and overall, people from Guangdong, Guangxi, and Fujian were most responsible for its introduction. Since the main transmission path was through Guangxi, the practices in the two provinces were much of a piece.

In the eleventh month of 1814, Mai Qing, a native of Guangdong who resided in Xingyi prefecture, Guizhou (in the southern tip of the province), crossed the border to Baise prefecture, Guangxi, on a peddling trip. On the road, he encountered Huang Jiaojing from Fujian, who told him that he possessed a society manual (*huishu*) in which the secret "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" was written, and then that if Mai Qing should ever be set upon by members of the Increase Brothers Society who were bent on robbing him, he could receive their protection instead of their harm by following the procedures outlined in the book. Mai Qing then borrowed Huang Jiaojing's secret book to copy.⁹⁰

A couple of years later, now back in Guizhou, Mai Qing met Yan Laosan and Yan Laowu, natives of Fujian who also resided in Xingyi, and discussed forming an Increase Brothers Society for the purpose of collective robbery. The two Yaos then copied Mai Qing's book and recruited ninety-two members, who paid between 100 wen and 600 wen each for the privilege of joining. They held their initiation ceremonies over two days, June 20-21, 1816 (JQ 21/5/25-26), in an empty temple. Because Yan Laosan was the clearest in his understanding of the society, he was made the "teacher" or "master" (*xiansheng*), while Yan Laowu and Mai Qing were chosen to be "great fathers" (*da ye*).

For their ceremonies, the three men adopted many of the practices prevalent in Fujian and Guangdong, but also made a few innovations. Behind the third of their three bamboo arches, each of which was guarded by two men with crossed knives, they erected a high platform bearing a midou and five placards with "Hong Ying" and other names. Five "fivecolored" flags, a ruler, scales, a double-bladed sword, and a mirror were then inserted into the midou, along with a large red cloth flag bearing the word *shuai* ("generalissimo"). Yan Laowu stood at the first arch, Liu Laojiu at the second, and Yan Laosan at the third. Their hair was loose, and each held a knife.

On entering the room, the initiates were instructed to let their hair down and cover their heads with red cloth. After passing through all the arches and crawling under the knives, they came to the spot where Yan Laosan was standing. In front of him, they swore an oath pledging mutual aid. They then drew blood from their fingers to mix with wine and drank it, signed their names to a list that was burned for the gods, and jumped over a fire to express the idea that as long as they were together, neither water nor fire could harm

them. The new members then agreed to open the second button of their outer garment as a sign of mutual recognition, and Yao Laosan transmitted the secret “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan” to them.⁹¹

During the Daoguang era, the ceremonies and rituals of the Tiandihui in Guizhou continued to reveal new developments. For example, by the time Ma Shaotang formed an association in Kaitai county in 1831, we hear that he had a tablet on which was written “First Ancestor Hong Qisheng and Prince Hong Ying”; that he wrote the poem, “When the red flag is unfurled, the heroes will come, sons of Heaven from the outside will come to restore the Ming dynasty” on red paper; and that besides the usual things (the three arches, the sworn oaths, the jumping over fire, the imbibing of blood mixed with wine), he had his initiates drink a mouthful of clear water called the *sanhe heshui* (“three joined waters”) and then chant in unison: “The water of the Sanhe River comes from Gaoxi; at Yangchun temple there are poems alluding to it; if you have drunk the water of the Sanhe River you can help the five lords ascend the throne quickly” (Sanhe heshui chu Gaoxi, Yangchun miaoli you shiti, nijin chile Sanheshui, baoyou wuzhu zao dengji). The new members then kowtowed and promised henceforth to withstand bravely both fire and flood. They also agreed that on going out in public, they would roll up their right sleeve to show their affiliation.⁹²

By 1835, when Xu Yugui created a society in Liping prefecture, the three arches had taken on some specificity. The first had become the water pass, and the second the fire pass; and in crawling through them, members demonstrated that they had no need to fear either fire or flood. On exiting the third pass, they found plaques of Hong Qisheng (the man we met earlier as allegedly plotting rebellion on Ding Mountain) and Prince Hong Ying (probably a reference to Zhu Hongzhu), to whom they were instructed to pay their respects. Beside this altar, on which Xu Yugui had placed a midou, a seven-star lamp, twenty-five “five-color” paper flags, a yellow paper umbrella, and a red banner with the character *shuai* (“generalissimo”), was a straw man or scarecrow. Each initiate had to pass under the altar and whack at the scarecrow with a knife, as he himself would be hacked to pieces, should he refuse to aid his fellow members. Afterward, the traditional blood oath was sworn, and Xu Yugui, his head done up in a red turban covered with gold paper flowers, passed the secrets of the society along.⁹³

The Development of the Society’s Anti-Manchu Ideology

The Tiandihui does not appear to have been visibly anti-Manchu at the time of its founding, and we have seen in the previous chapter that political ideology played a very small role in the early uprisings of Lu Mao, Li Amin, and Lin Shuangwen. Neither their slogan “Obey Heaven and follow the Way” nor their practice of fabricating scions of the bygone Song and Ming dynasties as spiritual leaders to rally around were unique. The summoning up of heirs of earlier dynasties, the flying of banners with slogans or reign titles of the era to come, the celebrating of the dawning of a new day in songs and poems—none of this was new to peasants rising up. In appealing for support by these means, members of the Tiandihui were simply following time-honored tradition.⁹⁴

For the most part, the Tiandihui was transmitted orally during the eighteenth century, so we cannot be certain exactly what went on. But the two documents we have—an oath and a register from the Lin Shuangwen era—make no reference to restoring the Ming. The oath, which exists in fragmentary form, dates from 1787 and refers to an alliance leader (*mengzhu*) at Guangdong’s Fenghua Pavilion and at the Gaoxi and Maxi temples, who transmitted the teaching. It also states that on this evening, the men were gathered to swear a blood oath that would unite them as brothers from the same womb. Like Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei (the fictional heroes of the Peach Garden), the members who gathered on this evening would form one family (*jia*) and be protected by a secret covenant (*miyue*). To prevent leaks, members were enjoined not to speak of their association to anyone—father, mother, or brother—lest they precipitate the fall of the entire family. Members were also encouraged to foreswear former enmities by spitting them out into the sea and to refrain from using the strong to bully the weak.⁹⁵ As for the register, which we spoke of earlier in connection with Yang Guangxun’s Increase Brothers Society in Taiwan, it is merely a membership list. It does not contain a single reference to the Ming dynasty, let alone any of the legends, songs, and poems celebrating the Ming that were to fill later manuals and huibu.⁹⁶

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Tiandihui, at least as far as we now know from the documents at hand, was quite unlike the White Lotus or other religious sects, whose customs and beliefs were grounded in sutras or scriptures. Its branches tended to spring up spontaneously, formed by leaders who were themselves often confused about the nature of their undertaking. But by then the society, pressed internally by a need for greater unity and more systemized transmission and externally by increased government persecution, was being pushed to respond with a nobler *raison d’être*. The result seems to have been the gradual incorporation of Ming restorationist slogans into society rhetoric and the elaboration of the Xi Lu creation myth. Both developments appear to have begun almost simultaneously with the

emergence of written records in the Jiaqing era that not only preserved society secrets but also afforded legitimization to aspiring leaders.⁹⁷

An explosion of written works then ensued, in which everything from membership certificates to oath books began turning up in increasing quantity among the effects of arrested members. Some of these written materials were simpler and less complex than others, but it is interesting to note how quickly the characteristics that would dominate the Tiandihui documents of a later era took shape in Qing China and how faithfully they were handed down, internal inconsistencies notwithstanding. It is also interesting to note, once again, how prominent a role men from Fujian, and especially Zhangzhou, played in these developments.

One of the earliest documents reflecting the changes afoot dates from the seventh lunar month of 1797, when Lu San joined the Increase Brothers Society of Huang Huazeng and was presented with a red-cloth huatie authorizing him to form units and raise money on his own. The huatie itself did not survive, or at least has not surfaced, but from the part quoted in a palace memorial of 1812, it stated that, in the year of the uprising in Sichuan, a priest from Gansu named Monk Wan Ti Xi had transmitted the society to Gaoxi in Huizhou, Guangdong, where it divided into five houses or branches (*fang*). On the back of the huatie was the reign title “Tianyun Shun-Tian” (Heavenly revolution; obey Heaven).⁹⁸

Here one can already see glimmerings of actual history in the references to the founder Ti Xi, his sojourn in Sichuan, his transmission of the society at Gaoxi, and its subsequent division into five houses, intertwined with heavy doses of fiction in the references to Ti Xi’s having been a priest in Gansu and the erroneous location of Gaoxi in Guangdong instead of Fujian. For all this, here in its essentials was the tale that would be repeatedly incorporated into other Tiandihui documents and into the Xi Lu Legend itself.

It is likely that huatie continued to emanate from Huang Huazeng and his followers in the Jiangxi—Fujian border region after 1797, although we do not hear of another one until 1805, when Yang Jinlang was said to have received a red cloth certificate on joining Lu Shenghai’s Tiandihui, which he used in creating his own Sandianhui and spreading it into Guangdong.⁹⁹ No trace of that huatie remains, but the one Lu gave to his initiate Zhou Dabin the next year has survived. It bears the date Shun-Tian, eighteenth day of the seventh month of the *bingyin* year (August 31, 1806).¹⁰⁰

After receiving his huatie, Zhou Dabin recruited Liu Meizhan and seems to have worked with him in founding additional societies, for paraphernalia was discovered at Liu’s home. A second huatie, written by Liu Meizhan himself, was also discovered. That document was quite different from Lu San’s. It made no mention of either Gansu or Sichuan. Instead, it evoked the tradition of the Peach Garden and the practice of “brothers” from different wombs aiding one another in times of trouble. Emphasis was also placed on the virtue of loyalty and on secrecy as “brothers” were enjoined to refrain from “spitting out” the society’s poems. Members were also warned against using force to exploit the weak and cheating fellow “brothers” in money matters. Mention was made of the division of the Tiandihui into five houses (*fang*) along with references to “Elder brother Wan Ti Xi.” Also included was the line of transmission of this particular Tiandihui through seven “generations”—from Tie Bi, to Huang Qing, to Lu Shenghai, to Zeng Changhan, to Qiu Zongyuan, to Zhou Dabin, and finally, to Liu Meizhan and He Zhoude.¹⁰¹

A companion piece to Liu Meizhan’s huatie was a document Lu Shenghai copied for his “disciples” adding other items of Tiandihui lore. It contains an extended discussion, in verse form, about the bridge that was re-created in nearly every Tiandihui initiation ceremony. It also makes reference to Muyang City; to water from the Sanhehe, or three rivers flowing 10,000 years; to the eight objects of Tiandihui “worship”; and to the oft-repeated line, “White clouds join Heaven” (*Yunbai lian-Tian*).¹⁰²

Another huatie, transmitted by Chen Jichuan to his initiate Li Kuisheng on June 1, 1811, harks back to Lu San’s in its references to the Tiandihui’s formative period in Sichuan. It reads:

In the year of the uprising in Sichuan, there was a priest cultivating his character in the Shaolin monastery in Taiping, the provincial capital of Gansu. His zi was Ti Xi, and his Buddhist name was Monk Wan. He transmitted four words [these are indecipherable characters, each written inside the radical for door]. He then transmitted the sect to Gaoxi in Huizhou, Guangdong, where the elder and younger brothers discussed dividing [the society] into five houses [*wufang*] and transmitted the four words, “White clouds join Heaven.” The brothers then split up—the second house was Gaoxi, the third was Guang[dong?] province.

Afterward, the brothers went to the five places, and transmitted the four words “*mu-li-dou-shi*.” After more discussion, the five elder brothers of the five houses transmitted four more words, “*Shun-Tian xingdao*” [Obey Heaven and follow the Way]. Fang Dahong, elder brother of the third house at Mount Wan, raised a

rebellion. The brothers again transmitted four words, “*Shun-Tian zihao*.” ... After today if there is disloyalty, the head [of the culprit] will be cut off as an object lesson for the masses.¹⁰³

Though none of these documents made any specific reference to Ming restorationism, we find that ideology cropping up around the turn of the century. The first written evidence dates from 1800, when the phrase “Restore the Ming House” figured in the oath taken by the members of Qiu Daqin’s society in Guangdong.¹⁰⁴ In the following year, Lin Tianshen of Haikang, Guangdong, included a more elaborate formula in the oath he administered: “To restore the Ming: all names have the same root and return to the Hong family. Getting together, they will jointly rule the land and share the state, and thus pass their fame into the memory of later generations.”¹⁰⁵

One of the slogans Chen Lanjisi chose for his banner during the Tiandihui uprising in Boluo county, Guangdong, in 1802 was “Obey Heaven, follow the Ming,” a clear play on the “Obey Heaven, follow the Way,” used by Xu Axie in the Qianlong era.¹⁰⁶ But it would be wrong to attach any importance to the raising of that cry in this case, for as we have seen, the uprisings that shook Boluo, Guishan, and Yongan counties that year centered on the rivalry between the Ox Head and Heaven and Earth societies and had nothing at all to do with either overthrowing the Qing or restoring the Ming.

Not so many years later, though, in 1807, the society leader Yin Zhiping did explicitly advocate the overthrow of the Manchus, filling in the empty spaces of his copy of the register *Dengji shu xiuqian mibu* with the words “Kill the Manchus in twenty-eight years” (*Tasi huren erbaqiu*); “Kill the Qing backbones” (*Danzhan Qingchao fan guren*); and “Overthrow the Qing and return to the Ming” (*Zhan-Qing juebei jingui Ming*).¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the “Peach Garden Song” of 1808, a document for the formation of new societies, with ready-made blanks for recording times and places, spoke of an impending rebellion by Hong Qisheng and his followers and called for “Restoring the Ming and removing the Qing” (*Fu-Ming qu-Qing*).¹⁰⁸

The testimony of Li Yu’en in 1811 also brought forth one of the explicit references to restoring the Ming. Li recounted how, during the tenth lunar month of that year, Su Zhisong had recruited him for Tiandihui membership by telling him a secret—to wit, that as early as 1793, Fan Qi of Zhejiang had transmitted to him a register that included the statement “Fan-Qing fu-Ming.” If Su Zhisong was correct in his date, and there really was a register from 1793 with these words, then this would constitute the first unequivocal use of the phrase discovered so far. But in the absence of the register itself, it is reasonable to see the reference more as a product of 1811 than a reflection of the sentiment in 1793.¹⁰⁹

Testimony like this and the surviving huibu and huatie are so far all we have to go on in our efforts to track these early-nineteenth-century changes. Though *mengshu*, or oath books, are known to have been in use as early as 1800 (recall that Chen Li’nan joined the society in Fujian then and obtained one from his teacher Chen Piao xue), no early copies have yet been discovered. But one early huibu, that of Yao Dagao (ca. 1810), which occupies fully twenty-eight pages in the *Tiandihui* series, is remarkably similar to society documents later turned up by Westerners in Southeast Asia and contains many of the same poems, couplets, catechisms, and secret hand signals then in use.

Yao’s huibu opens with the sine qua non of all society secrets, “Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan,” and then presents the earliest version to date of the Xi Lu Legend. The poems that follow refer to many of the ideas and practices already discussed, including the Tiandihui’s division into five houses; the symbol of the bridge; the water of the Sanhe River; the Gaoxi temple and the Changlin monastery; the codes “three, eight, twenty-one” and *mu-li-dou-shi*; “Hong” as the source (*ben*); the fabled city of MUYANG; the eight items of “worship”; and the slogan “Shun-Tian xingdao.” This is also where we first hear of one Su Dahong, who figures in a later version of the legend.¹¹⁰

This huibu is valuable not only because it is the most elaborate statement of early-nineteenth-century Tiandihui beliefs and practices we have, but also because it is compelling evidence that “restorationist” ideas had been flourishing in the preceding years. Among its several overt references to that ideology, we find “All under Heaven know that the Qing must be cut off” (*Tianxia zhishi Qing gajue*); “When the 10,000 *li* are united, the Ming will rise again” (*Wanli hetong Ming zaixing*); and “Restore the Ming; exterminate the Qing, and establish the Dragon Throne” (*Fu-Ming jue-Qing, deng longwei*).¹¹¹ The slogan “Support [or revive] the Ming, cut off the Qing” (*Fu-Ming jue-Qing*) also appears in its version of the Xi Lu Legend.

Unfortunately, our ability to trace the evolution of Ming restorationism through the remainder of the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns is hampered by a lack of documentation. In fact, although references to huibu abound in the legal cases after 181,¹¹² only one, dating from sometime after 1828, has so far appeared: the Yang family huibu, discovered in Tianlin County, Guangxi, in 1985. Because the manual remains in private

hands and has never been published, we do not know the full extent of its restorationist rhetoric.

In terms of the evidence now available, the slogan “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” that has been so closely linked to much of Tiandihui history seems to have emerged relatively late—in conjunction with the Taiping Rebellion (and the version of the Xi Lu Legend contained in the Gui County manuscript).¹¹³

Conclusion

Many of the features that had characterized the Tiandihui at the time of its founding remained remarkably consistent throughout the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns. Societies continued to emerge with predictable regularity in provincial frontiers and along the transportation networks, where polyglot populations sojourned back and forth. As new units sprang up, the main message was always the same: mutual aid. Oaths in which members promised to assist one another were standard across the board.

Leaders made no secret of the fact that theirs was also a money-making enterprise, and that members could not only get protection, but reap profits to boot. In fact, robbery provided one of the main incentives for getting organized. With robbery and extortion as a foundation, the stage was set for movement into other types of organized crime, such as prostitution, smuggling, and gambling, activities that increasingly characterized Tiandihui activity in the late nineteenth century. Rebellion also continued to be a society activity, but rather than adding anything new to the history of peasant insurrection, the Tiandihui seems to have been best suited for the conduct of traditional uprisings.

Although there had been little to distinguish the Tiandihui from its counterparts during the Qianlong era, by the end of the Daoguang period it was well on its way to becoming one of China’s most long-lived *huidang*.

This success probably owed in part to the way in which decentralized transmission processes allowed the society to spread quickly through much of South China and to be assimilated into the roots of local society. In part, it may have been due to the “secret” gestures or signs that enabled speakers of mutually unintelligible dialects to communicate, and unacquainted brothers to make contact wherever they happened to meet.

Finally, the society’s penchant for recording its legends, ceremonies, and songs, which were then handed down from leader to leader, may have yielded a great advantage in the struggle for survival, for it was often the case that after a few years, societies without written records would find their members scattering and their organizations falling apart.

Ironically, these documents that presumably served to bind the Tiandihui and its members through space and time have served to divide its historians. As the source for nearly all of the accounts written about the Tiandihui since the turn of the century, they have given rise not only to one of the most passionate controversies of all Chinese historiography, but also to a picture of the Tiandihui’s origins that stands in marked contrast to the one presented here. More ironically still, far from resolving the dispute, the opening of the Ming-Qing archives in the 1970’s has merely served to heighten it. What the controversy is all about and what scholars in both the West and the East have had to say about the origins of the Tiandihui are the subjects of the next two chapters.

The Tiandihui in Western Historiography

Curiously enough, it was foreigners, not Chinese, who first became interested in the Tiandihui in its own right. Their interest was practical rather than scholarly, and their focus contemporary rather than historical. As civil servants of the Dutch, British, and French governments, their task was to deal with the overseas Chinese communities of Southeast Asia. These communities were often more under the control of societies than of their respective colonial governments, and consequently, civil servants tried to learn as much as they could about them. Some went so far as to join them and participate in their initiation ceremonies. Others gleaned their knowledge through the handling and processing of offenders arrested within their bailiwicks.

It was also Westerners and not Chinese who first applied the term “secret societies” to these organizations. As the French historian Jean Chesneaux has pointed out, the Chinese terms *mimi shehui* and *mimi xiehui* are literal translations from the Westerners’ usage, which was picked up by and introduced into Chinese by Hirayama Shū, a Japanese activist who participated in the 1911 Revolution. Because the Chinese of the time simply referred to all clandestine groups as either sects (*jiaomen*) or political associations (*huidang*), Hirayama coined the term *mimi shehui* to describe organizations like the Tiandihui.¹

For nearly a century, the works and translations of colonial scholars such as Gustave Schlegel, William Stanton, W. G. Stirling, and J. S. M. Ward provided the only sources for the study of the Tiandihui. Their focus on its oaths, rituals, and legends turned up repeated references to the slogan “Fan-Qing fu-Ming,” giving rise to the idea that the society was primarily a political organization or had been so at one time.

1850-1950: Colonial and Freemason Concerns

The nineteenth-century environment of the European colonial officials was one in which secret societies dominated the intellectual landscape. Foremost among these was the order of Freemason, which had commanded the membership of such luminaries as Benjamin Franklin, Frederick the Great of Prussia, Wolfgang Mozart, and Voltaire. Many of the civil servants were members themselves, and the rest were certainly aware of the Freemasons’ existence.

The Masons constituted one of the oldest and largest fraternal organizations in the world. Many of its ideals and rituals stemmed from the period of cathedral building between the tenth and sixteenth centuries, a time when the stoneworkers or masons formed guilds in various European cities and towns. As one such group, the “free masons” traveled from community to community and organized themselves into lodges. With the decline of cathedral building, these lodges became purely social societies, joined by men who had never even thought of working with their hands. Contemporary Masons trace their origins to the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. From there, the movement spread quickly to the Continent, where between 1770 and 1832 it took on political and military overtones.²

The Western discovery of secret societies in China at a time of widespread suspicion of this darker side of Masonry caused Freemasons to seize on the find to prove that theirs was an honorable order that had originated in antiquity. As a result, when European civil servants encountered the Tiandihui and its offshoots in Asia, they immediately focused on the similarities between the secret societies of the East and West. Freemason intellectuals created the myth that the Chinese and Masonic orders were descendants of a common mystic ancestor. Masonic historians propounded the idea that their order had originated in the ancient Near East and spread into both the Orient and the Occident, and Freemason intellectuals adopted the “comparative method” to demonstrate that their mandate dated back thousands of years.³ At the same time, no Freemason wished to accept responsibility for or be identified with the illegal activities of the Chinese societies. Thus polemical discussions on the relationship between the contemporary societies in China and the West were carried on in Masonic journals.⁴

Even though the common origin theory has long since been disavowed, and the commonalities between the Tiandihui and Freemasonry attributed to mere circumstance, there are, at first glance, striking similarities. Both were fraternal orders that relied on brotherhood as a social leveler. Both were divided into largely autonomous subunits, known in the West as chapters or lodges, that were loosely linked with one another through common initiation ceremonies. And perhaps most tellingly, both used the symbolism of the triangle. By the mid-nineteenth century, as we shall see, “Triad” had come into widespread usage among Westerners as a generic term for the Tiandihui and its offshoots. For the Masons, the triangle, along with the circle, was a key symbol. Originally venerated for the same reason the ancient Pythagoreans venerated it—as the simplest means of enclosing a surface with straight lines—it later, in revolutionary Masonry, became imbued with the additional symbolism of Pythagorean occultism. Revolutionary groups held that the three elements of nature—fire, water, and earth—had to be energized by an “allanimating principle” or “point of sunrise” represented as a dot in the center of an equilateral triangle. Any letter, symbol, or maxim that a particular group wished to venerate was given this central place of authority within the triangular seal.⁵

There were still other points of similarity. Both societies made use of magical numbers, especially “three,” both emerged in the late eighteenth century, and both became vehicles for political movements. Just as Masonry was deliberately used by European revolutionaries of the early nineteenth century “as a recruiting ground for their first conspiratorial experiments in political organization,”⁶ so the Tiandihui was used by Chinese revolutionaries of the early twentieth century as one of their main organizational tools. Finally, the history of both has been difficult to trace, and at times the scholarship about them has been more concerned with what people thought they were about than with what they were actually about.

Fascinated by the surface similarities, the early scholars in their search for a common origin overlooked the equally obvious difference, namely, the ideological gulf that separated Freemasonry from the Tiandihui. The Tiandihui did not have any spiritual or intellectual underpinnings or share the Masons’ concern with moral order. If joining the Tiandihui meant being “reborn” into new families or communities, this was never held up as a means of access to the higher truths of nature or as a way to attain a new moral perfection freed from all established religion and political authority.

The pioneer in the study of Chinese secret societies was Dr. William Milne, principal of the Anglo-Chinese College (in Malacca), who, in 1821, wrote the first systematic account of the “Three Unities Society” (Sanhehui). In this brief work, still unfinished at his death in 1822, he described what he knew of the society’s name, object, organization, initiation rituals, secret signs, and seal. It was he, apparently, who coined the popular name “Triad.”⁷

It was also Milne who started scholars on the search for a Freemason connection. He pointed out that, like the Masons, the Chinese secret societies were characterized by pretensions to antiquity, pursued mutual assistance as their professed object, held ceremonies of initiation and oath taking, and were under tripartite governance; according to him, the three “elder brothers” in the Sanhehui were the counterparts of the apprentices, fellow-craftsmen, and masters of the Freemasons.⁸

Milne freely admitted that he had not been able to obtain information on the Sanhehui’s laws, discipline, and internal management, but he was sure that so far as its object was concerned, it had “degenerated from mere mutual assistance, to theft, robbery, the overthrow of regular government, and an aim at political power,” so that society members now “engage[d] to defend each other against attacks from police officers, to hide each other’s crimes; [and] to assist detected members to make their escape from the hands of justice.”⁹

Milne’s description of the society’s initiation ceremonies is remarkably consistent with the accounts presented in Chapter Two. He noted that small sums of money were always paid by initiates to support the general expense of the ceremonies, which were held at night in secluded spots; that the initiates took an oath beneath crossed swords in a rite referred to as “crossing the bridge,” and that the ceremonies came to an end with the sacrifice of a cock, whose head was cut off in “the usual form of a Chinese oath, intimating ‘thus let perish all who divulge the secret,’” and the invocation of Heaven and Earth.

Milne also mentioned that members used three fingers (thumb, together with the index and middle fingers) when receiving objects so as to recognize each other, and that they used the words “Sanbai ershiyi” (321) as a code for “Hong” (as opposed to the formula we saw earlier, “San ba ershiyi” or 3, 8, 21). He concluded his article with a detailed description of the society’s seal.¹⁰ Some thirty years later, S. Wells Williams, another student of the Tiandihui, applauded Milne’s achievement in providing “the chief amount

of the information possessed by the uninitiated respecting the objects and formation of the Triad Society.”¹¹

Next to comment on the secret societies of Southeast Asia were two military men, Lieutenant T. J. Newbold, garrison officer in the Straits Settlement, and Major-General F. W. Wilson of the Madras Army. Newbold had managed to gain admittance to a Triad “rendezvous” in Malacca in 1835, and with Wilson as co-author, he published a lengthy account of the affair in 1841. Their major contribution was the first English translation of the society’s thirty-six oaths and rules of behavior (see Appendix E, doc. 1).

Although the bulk of the authors’ information comes from Singapore and Malacca, the ceremonies that Newbold saw are much in keeping with those of China discussed above:

The rules and penalties of the *Tien-ti-huih*, (or as they style themselves “The Peach Garden Association,”) are contained in one book, which is kept by the head of the society, whose title is *Tai-ko*, which signifies elder brother, and under whom are two subordinates, with the titles of *ji-ko*, second brother, and *san-ko*, third brother.... The book, with a chalice containing a mixture of ardent spirit &c., is placed on a table and brought to the person about to take the oaths underneath the glittering arch....

With the knife he [the initiate] makes an incision into his finger, and allows three drops of blood to fall into the chalice of spirit. The three officials do so likewise, and, having mingled the blood and spirit together, drink each a portion thereof, all standing....

Among the secret signs of recognition, is—the mutual production of the seals impressed on red cloth, which are generally carried concealed about the person; but signs are more frequently resorted to, known only to the initiated, viz. that made on entering a house with their queue, by taking it in the right hand and twisting it from left to right; the method of setting an umbrella down, or of pulling on their clothes, of lifting up a cup to drink tea or arrack, which they have been observed to do invariably with three fingers.¹²

For all the similarities between the Tiandihui and the Freemasons (“The resemblance between some of the rites observed by the Tien-ti-hui ... remind us of the Western systems of Freemasonry”), Newbold and Wilson thought that a comparison to the secret tribunals of Germany was more apt:

When we consider that the Chinese fraternity originally was formed for political purposes, that its objects in the Mother country ... are still to upset the present Tartar dynasty, ... we shall, perhaps, be inclined to classify the Tien-ti-hui with the secret tribunals of Germany, between which a few resemblances in minor points have already been traced.... In their weakness lies their harmlessness; and the little good they can effect by mutual assistance to each other is more than counterbalanced by the injustice and injury caused to those around.¹³

Newbold and Wilson were the first to report (for public consumption, anyway) the use of secret societies as forums for ethnic or regional rivalries among Chinese in overseas communities and to point out how ties of native place seemed to bind members of a particular order in their hostility to people from a different locale.¹⁴

Charles Gützlaff’s article on the secret “Triad” society of China (1846) contains the first translations of society manuscripts from China itself, including a version of the society’s Xi Lu Legend that seems much like a composite of the versions referred to here as the Shouxian Manuscript and the Preface. Among the other translations are a few verses recited on the initiation of new members and an oath. (The last, in contrast to the oath presented by Newbold and Wilson, was very short; see Appendix E, doc. 2).

In the surrounding text, Gützlaff mentioned that members’ means of mutual recognition or identification extended to the ways in which they wore their jackets and shoes, lit their pipes, smoked opium, and placed their teacups on the saucers.¹⁵ He also stated that though people from all social classes were permitted to join the Tiandihui, its members were typically “mandarins of low degree, police runners, soldiers, merchants, brothel-keepers, gamblers, and needy characters of every description,” and that their aims were always political:

The grand theme is always restoration of the Ming dynasty.... To maintain unanimity and propagate the spirit of resistance, they convoke frequent meetings, at which the oldest and most experienced brethren preside. They here renew their oath of fidelity towards each other, denounce traitors with dreadful curses, and even mingle their blood together as a token of interminable friendship.... The object of these

associations is to uphold everything ancient against barbarian encroachment, and defend the rights of the Celestial Empire.¹⁶

Yet, Gützlaff said, “It is a remarkable circumstance, that with all their ardent desire for political changes, the fraternity only once, during the last war [Opium War, 1840-42], appeared on the theatre of political conflict.”¹⁷ Unfortunately, Gützlaff neither specified the provenance of his documents nor included the Chinese texts.

Additional manuscripts and documents, some written on cloth, others written in the form of pamphlets or on small paper flags, were the centerpiece of an article by S. Wells Williams (authored in collaboration with, or translated from, a study by Doctor Hoffman, a professor of Chinese at the University of Leiden and a good friend of Gustave Schlegel’s). The most important items discussed were an elaborate version of the Xi Lu Legend closely akin to the Preface and a list of the thirty-six oaths that differs somewhat from the list published by Newbold and Wilson (Appendix E, doc. 3). Williams/Hoffman were convinced that the object of the society was “to subvert the dynasty and place a native prince on the throne,” though the means for doing so were admittedly “involved in mystery.”¹⁸

“Secret Societies in China” (ca. 1854), by a Scottish missionary, A. Wylie, is a rambling, unfocused account that reiterates much of what had already been said by Milne and Gützlaff. It includes eyewitness accounts of a nocturnal initiation ceremony in Singapore in 1824 and society insurrections in Amoy and Shanghai in the 1850’s. Its chief value lies in its lengthy descriptions and reproductions of three society seals from the 1840’s and 1850’s. Wylie was also the first to point out that in writing code words by affixing the radicals for “rain,” “water,” or “tiger” to other words, Tiandihui members were following a practice long employed by Daoists, though he speculated that this may not have been a case of borrowing but a custom that had originated independently among the society members themselves.¹⁹

Fastening like others on the similarities between Masonry and the Tiandihui, Wylie wrote that the scattered members of the Tiandihui were bound together “by a kind of free-masonry, using certain private signals whereby to recognize each other.”²⁰ What was more impressive, in his view, was how very strong this bond was among the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. According to him, “the avowed object of overthrowing the present Chinese dynasty seems to lose none of its energy or independence among the members who settle in foreign countries,” as demonstrated in 1831, where they were the only Chinese able to make a stand against the ruler’s oppressive demands.²¹ From Wylie we have yet another version of the Xi Lu Legend; it is somewhat akin to the Preface.

The first full book devoted to the society, *Thian Ti Hwui: The Hung-League or Heaven and Earth League*, was written by Gustave Schlegel, Chinese-language interpreter to the government of the Netherlands Indies. It was based on documents discovered by the police in 1863 in the home of a Chinese settler in Padang, Sumatra. Thanks to Schlegel’s meticulous scholarship in translation and the inclusion of many of the Chinese texts from which he worked, the book has withstood the test of time; it has been reprinted on several occasions and remains a useful guide to comprehending Triad literature and initiation ceremonies.

A man in tune with his time, Schlegel devoted his Introduction to the most extensive discussion to that point of the similarities between the Hong League and Freemasonry, as he understood that movement from what he had been told by Dr. Joseph Schauberg, a “learned mason from Zurich.”²² Beginning with the supposition that Masonry had split into two branches, one passing to the West and the other to the East, Schlegel pointed out a whole series of commonalities between the Freemasons and the Tiandihui, namely, in their moral teachings; in their ideas about rest and motion, change and permanence; in their use of certain symbols, including not just the triangle, but also the fir, pine, and cedar to signify eternal life; in their search for light; and in their preoccupation with swords (whose straight blades were said to resemble shafts of light) and sacred numbers (especially three). (But like his friend Hoffman, he was struck as well by the resemblance between the Triads’ affixing strings of water, tiger, or other radicals to Chinese characters and Daoist practices.²³) Schlegel also equated the lodges of the Masonic order with the “fang” or houses of the Tiandihui.

The text proper is divided into six parts and is devoted exclusively to the Hong League (Tiandihui). Part One, “The History of the Hung League,” is the least satisfactory—as Schlegel himself recognized in his opening remarks. Because “the Chinese annals do not throw any light on the origin of the Hung league,” he wrote, it was “impossible to tell with any certainty whence the Hung league sprung.”²⁴ His best guess was that its origins lay in the clan system and Buddhism of Chinese antiquity, even though, by his own admission, it “did not appear as a regular political body before the Tartar [Manchu] sway,” and had only

become “better known” since the time of Zheng Chenggong.²⁵ The part closes with a translation of the Xi Lu Legend that most closely resembles the so-called Narration.

Schlegel was on surer footing in the other five parts, which are largely devoted to descriptions of the society’s lodges, diplomas, flags, and secret signs and to translations of its documents, laws, and statutes. Schlegel also presented his audience with a translation of an initiation ceremony that, although far more elaborate than anything unearthed in China before 1840, featured the use of a bridge of swords, the sacrifice of a cock, the drinking of wine and blood, the burning of written oaths, and the issuing of membership certificates. Schlegel also pointed out that for these privileges, new members paid fees of 600 *cash* each. It is clear that much of the catechism recited during the initiation described by Schlegel derived from the Xi Lu Legend, but beyond that its source of origin is unknown.

The thirty-six articles he presented resemble but are not identical to those in the Williams/Hoffman article, and like his predecessors, Schlegel provided no copy of the Chinese text from which they were taken and no clue to their provenance. Nevertheless, a contemporary’s assessment of Schlegel’s endeavor probably rings as true today as it did a century ago:

Any European who will take the trouble to thoroughly digest M. Schlegel’s invaluable work on the subject will know more of the origin, ceremonies, and ostensible objects of the Thien-Ti-Hui than nine out of ten of the Masters of Lodges in the Straits Settlements.²⁶

The author of this accolade, W. A. Pickering, served simultaneously as a member of the Tiandihui and an employee of the Malayan civil service. This rather strange juxtaposition of affiliations was possible because at certain periods in the late nineteenth century, “secret societies” within the Straits Settlements were legal—provided they were registered with the proper colonial authorities. Quick to avail himself of the opportunity to join the society and ascertain what went on therein, Pickering used the information he gleaned in an article entitled “Chinese Secret Societies and their Origin” (1878). Pickering supplemented this material with what he had learned from registering various Chinese society lodges in Singapore, Malaysia, and Malacca and speaking with their masters, and from perusing Tiandihui manuals and books (of which he owned two).

Yet for all his first-hand knowledge, when it came to addressing the relationship between the Tiandihui and the Freemasons, he had no quarrel with his predecessor and dismissed the subject with a single remark:

There is great reason to believe that originally in the long past, it [the Tiandihui] was a system of Freemasonry, and that its object was to benefit mankind by spreading a spirit of brotherhood and by teaching the duties of man to God, and to his neighbor. The motto of the Thien-Ti-Hui, whether acted upon or not, is “Obey Heaven and Work Righteousness,” and the association which could adopt this principle as its fundamental rule must have been composed of individuals raised far above the ideas of mere political adventurers.²⁷

Curiously, he went on to comment: “oppression ... may have forced the Society to become a political association,” for one of its “avowed objects” was “the overthrow of the Ching.”²⁸ How he came to this notion is puzzling, for overthrowing the Qing was not an overt goal among any of the groups that he himself observed. These seemed to him concerned wholly with intrigue, feuding, extorting, and lawbreaking in general. Accordingly, he suggested that the Tiandihui should be reformed in ways conducive to order and tranquility.²⁹

The bulk of Pickering’s account is taken up by a composite version of the Xi Lu Legend, drawn from accounts in the manuals used by several branches in Singapore and Malacca. It most closely resembles what is called the Hirayama version, but again no provenance is provided.

The Triad Society or Heaven and Earth Association (1899-1900), the work of William Stanton, a British police official in Hong Kong, was written, he said, in the hope that it would “prove useful to government officials, and others who have dealings with the Chinese, in enabling them to solve the meaning of any Triad writings or insignia that may happen to fall into their hands.”³⁰ Like Gustave Schlegel, Stanton turned most of his efforts to explaining the rudiments of the society: everything from how it was organized and how it operated to the meanings of the secret insignia, words, and signs.

To support his thesis that secret societies flourished in China more than in any other part of the world,

Stanton began his book with a broad survey of Chinese societies, including the Yellow Turbans, the White Lotus sect, and the Eight Trigrams.³¹

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Stanton did not believe that the White Lotus and the Tiandihui shared a common origin, though he was not exactly sure when the society had been founded. It possibly dated back to 1674 (the jiayin year of the Kangxi reign), 1734 (the jiayin year of the Yongzheng reign), or 1749. But regardless of the specific date, he stated, “all agree that it owed its origin to an infamous act of perfidy, in the burning of the Shaolin Monastery, and the massacre of most of its inmates after they had done good service to the Manchu cause.”³²

The most interesting part of Stanton’s account of the society’s origins is his explanation of why, if the Tiandihui was founded in 1674 as its members claimed, its literature made no mention of the Wu Sangui rebellion, which broke out that year.³³ Stanton assumed that society members had in fact participated in the uprising but supposed that the role they played may have been so small that it “appeared unimportant and unworthy of record to others who watched or took part in the great conflict that so seriously threatened to overthrow Manchu power.”³⁴ Or, he speculated, perhaps Wu Sangui’s killing of the southern Ming Emperor Yongli was considered so reprehensible that his name was best lost to history.³⁵

The society’s *raison d’être* within China, according to Stanton, was to “overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming,”³⁶ and he devoted much of one section of the book to the Triads’ activities in various uprisings, beginning with the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion in Taiwan in 1787, and ending with the uprisings in Xiamen, Shanghai, and Canton in the 1850’s during the Taiping Rebellion. Outside of China, as he saw it, “the combination for mutual benefit in time of poverty, sickness, and death” was “the main object.”³⁷ Here his discussion centered understandably on society activity in Hong Kong.

To the accumulating storehouse of Tiandihui documents, Stanton contributed yet another version of the Xi Lu Legend (closest in form to the Hirayama account). It is one of the most complex versions of the legend, which means that it probably dates from the late nineteenth century.

The initiation ceremony described by Stanton, though more elaborate than any for which we have record in China before the Opium War, nevertheless bears a strong resemblance to the ones examined in the preceding chapter. According to Stanton:

The largest initiations in the colony of Hongkong take place late at night, in temporarily fitted-up lodges.... Some of these [lodges] are divided into three parts to represent the outer, centre, and inner walls of a city. At initiations there are two men posted to hold a large circle or hoop of bent bamboos at the entrance to each division. These, besides supporting the hoops, are each armed with a sword and act as guards. All entering these lodges have to pass through the hoops and thus to *yap hun*, enter the circle, has become a slang term for joining the society. The inner circle is filled up with shrines and all the other necessary paraphernalia.³⁸

On the night of the initiation, the officers and members of the lodge assembled wearing red turbans, with their hair arranged in Ming style (i.e., not in queues). At the end of a long catechism, the candidates knelt, held out three sticks of burning incense, and listened to a reading of the thirty-six oaths, which were written on a scroll of yellow paper. After this each candidate dipped sticks of incense into a bowl of water and said, “May my life go out like the fire of these incense sticks if I prove a traitor or false to my oath.” The paper on which the oaths were written was then set on fire as an offering to the gods, a cock was sacrificed, a few drops of the members’ blood was mingled with a mixture of its blood, ashes from the burned oaths, incense, wine, and water, and the mixture was passed around and drunk. Afterward, the newcomers paid an entrance fee of one dollar each and were presented with a certificate of membership (*yaoping*, or purse) and instructed in the secrets of the society.³⁹

Stanton concluded his book with a discussion of the membership certificates, oaths, and rules of conduct. Ten certificates of membership, gathered from all over Southeast Asia, were reproduced in his text. One of his most helpful contributions was presenting two versions of the thirty-six oaths: the one in the text, given only in English translation, and another in the appendix, where he also ran the Chinese original. (Because Stanton’s book is widely available, these oaths are not reproduced here.)

Pickering’s successor in the Malayan civil service, W. G. Stirling, an assistant protector of Chinese, a Freemason, and a suppressor of the area’s secret societies, collaborated with J. S. M. Ward in a three-volume study entitled *The Hung Society or the Society of Heaven and Earth* (1925). Convinced of the Hong League’s link to the Freemasons, Ward and Stirling wanted to demonstrate that the two orders were

descendants of a common mystic ancestor. As A. C. Haddon said in his Introduction to the work:

The discussion of the history and development of the Hung Society seems to establish the fact that the ceremony described is based upon ancient ritual, and the parallels between the working of the Hung Society and our Freemasonry are not due to any borrowing of the one from the other, but owe their similarity to a very ancient rite or series of rites.⁴⁰

The first volume, authored by Stirling, is of greatest use to the historian, for in the tradition of Schlegel and Stanton, Stirling there presented exhaustive accounts of initiation ceremonies and detailed explanations of the argot used by the lodges of Singapore. The major rituals in his account are similar to those described by Stanton, though his version of the Xi Lu Legend is closer to the Preface version (Appendix B, doc. 6) than to Stanton's Hirayama-like version. In addition, Stirling added to the collection yet another English translation of the thirty-six oaths (as with the Stanton list, this is not reproduced here because of the wide availability of the book).

Less useful to the historian are Volumes Two and Three, authored by J. S. M. Ward, which focus on the mysticism of the Triads' esoteric literature. In the second volume, Ward endeavored to show how the ceremony of the Hong Society was an allegory for the journey of the soul through the underworld, paradise, and the city of God; in the third, his aim was to discover "the magical significance of many peculiar incidents in the Hung ceremonies" as a preliminary to a full "consideration of the mystical interpretation of the rite."⁴¹

Thirty-five years after Stirling and Ward published their opus magnum, another civil servant of the British empire, the Hong Kong police commissioner W. P. Morgan, published a study entitled *Triad Societies in Hong Kong* (1960). Morgan drew most of his information from police records and especially those related to an anti-Triad raid in 1956. His design, in this self-styled "latter-day" account, was to "illustrate the growth and degeneration of Triad societies in Hong Kong" in the hope of assisting police officers in their handling of them. He also wished to assist the ordinary reader to understand the true nature of "these criminal societies that plague us."⁴²

Morgan's undergirding premise was that some kind of central authority was once exerted over the various lodges, but that in the aftermath of the 1911 Revolution, central control fell by the wayside, and the strength of the society dissipated.⁴³ As he explained:

For about the last century and certainly since 1912, the Society has undergone a steady deterioration of purpose. The formation of the Chinese Republic by Dr. Sun Yat Sen really marked the fulfillment of the Society's aim, which was the overthrow of the Ch'ing dynasty.... Official recognition was virtually accorded the Triad organisations for their assistance in setting up the Republic and they soon became deeply involved in the political imbroglios of the system they had helped to create.... Obligations of blood brotherhood were largely forgotten as one branch tried to eliminate its opponents. This internal strife brought to the surface a new type of leader, the "bully boy" or street fighter, and promotion to official rank began to depend more on fighting ability than knowledge of Triad matters. This deterioration has continued until the present day.⁴⁴

Morgan's major focus was on the beliefs, practices, organization, rituals, and development of the Triad movement in Hong Kong. Like his predecessors, he began with a history of the Triad society that was the least satisfactory part of his endeavor, and like them, he believed that the Tiandihui had emerged during the Kangxi reign: "It has not yet been established as an historical fact that the Triad Society was founded in K'ang Hsi's time, though there appears to be justification for believing that this was so."⁴⁵ But he also commented, like Stanton before him, on the absence of Wu Sangui from all Tiandihui lore:

It is significant that this abortive but initially promising anti-Manchu rebellion by Wu San-Kuei received insufficient popular support in the south and receives no mention at all in the traditional Triad history. This was because Wu was regarded as a traitor responsible for the establishment of the Ch'ing Dynasty, and was hated and despised for his pursuit and extermination of the last of the Ming Emperors.⁴⁶

The most interesting part of the book for the historian is the fourth chapter, where Morgan recounts the major episodes of Triad history in Hong Kong. Of most significance are his comments on the society's infiltration of the colony's labor markets, the split in its ranks at the time of the Japanese invasion, and the changes under the impact of refugees from the mainland after 1949.

In the second part, Morgan turned from the history of the society to a detailed examination of its lodges, initiation ceremonies, and paraphernalia. But to his mind, these were things that ought to be studied in their own right. As he put it in his introductory remarks, “No attempt has been made in this account to compare the Triad Society with Freemasonry or any other society, past or present, outside of China,” and one can detect a veiled criticism of Ward and his quest for a common origin of ancient rites in the later comment, “It should be realised ... that in examining a secret society whose exact origin, laws, and procedure are unknown there is a tendency to interpret more meaning into the ritual and instruments than might have been originally intended.”⁴⁷

For about a century after Milne’s effort in 1827, Chinese and non-Chinese writers alike relied on Western-language translations of documents obtained from overseas Chinese communities and on the accounts of firsthand observers for the study of the Tiandihui. Missionaries tended to take an interest in secret societies, with the result that journals like the *Chinese Recorder* abound with notes and commentaries on their activities. Likewise, observers of the political scene kept watch on the societies’ doings. The *North China Herald*, for example, contains valuable accounts of the cooperation between the Guomindang and the secret societies on the Chinese mainland. And European civil servants continued to concern themselves with the “Triads” until the dissolution of their colonial empires after the Second World War. But for contemporary Western historians (and their Chinese counterparts, for that matter), the Tiandihui and others of its ilk were unworthy of anything more than “disdainful mention.”⁴⁸

Only much later, long after Chinese scholars had become intrigued by the subject as it related to the 1911 Revolution, did Western historians take much note of the secret society phenomenon. Moreover, the first of these, heavily influenced by the preoccupation of China’s early Tiandihui scholars with Sun Yat-sen and his legacy, took up the cause of hagiography as well. Among them was Carl Glick, who in 1947 collaborated with Hong Sheng-hwa on a popular account of Sun’s experiences as a revolutionary between the time of his first visit to San Francisco in 1886 and the overthrow of the Manchu government in 1911. Their book, *Swords of Silence: Chinese Societies—Past and Present*, allegedly based on previously “confidential Chinese documents and papers,”⁴⁹ is concerned with Sun’s dealings with the various societies as he competed with other reformers and revolutionaries for the support of his fellow Chinese at home and abroad.

1950—1980: The New Interest in Chinese Social Studies

When, in the 1950’s, a new generation of Western scholars turned their attention to Chinese secret societies, they put aside their predecessors’ preoccupation with argot and initiation ceremonies and began to investigate the groups from the perspectives of anthropology, sociology, and history. Early in the field was Laai Yi-fai, whose dissertation, “The Part Played by the Pirates of Kwangtung and Kwangsi Provinces in the Taiping Insurrection” (1950), was the first English-language study of the phenomenon to be based on official Chinese sources such as gazetteers and memorials of local officials. In his work, Laai Yi-fai incorporated an investigation of the secret societies into a larger inquiry into the relationship between the Triads and the pirates of Guangxi and Guangdong during the early stages of the Taiping Rebellion. That inquiry revealed, among other things, the contribution made by the pirate Lo Ta-kang (Luo Dagang) to the Taipings in enlisting his fellow Triads into the cause, including, most importantly, Jen Wen-ping (Ren Wenbing), who made diversionary attacks along the river that enabled the Taipings to survive the siege of Yungan (Guangxi) between September 25, 1851, and April 5, 1852.⁵⁰ Laai Yi-fai’s researches also led him to enter the debate over Hong Daquan, a Triad leader from Hunan, whose exact identity and importance to the Taipings have been much disputed. In his confession to government officials, Hong Daquan (Hung Ta-ch’uan) claimed that he was the “Tiande wang” (Heavenly Virtue King) of the Taipings, but his claim has never been conclusively substantiated. After a lengthy discussion of the details, Laai concluded that the title “T’ien-teh” (Tiande) that Hong pretended to was actually a term the Taipings employed to enlist the support of the Triads, to create psychological panic among the imperialists, and to keep their enemies in the dark about their own faltering movement.⁵¹

The anthropologist G. William Skinner was interested in the socioeconomic implications of Chinese secret societies. First drawn to the subject through his investigation of Chinese communities in Thailand, Skinner analyzed the multifunctional nature of the societies in an overseas community.⁵² From there his research moved on to an application of central place theory to marketing strategies in rural China, where his findings suggested that the standard market town was a key unit not only in the exchange of goods, but also in the realm of secret society organization. Skinner noted that from 1916 to 1928, during the Republican period, market towns served as both the political and the economic centers of the Elder Brother Society (Gelaohui): In Szechwan during the republican period, the secret societies collectively known as the *Ko-lao hui* wielded

supreme power at all levels of rural society—and the standard marketing community was no exception. It was, in fact, a most crucial unit, for lodges of the society were organized by, and limited in almost every case to a single standard marketing community.... In Kao-tien-tzu, as in many other market towns of the Szechwan Basin, the market itself was controlled by one of the secret-society lodges. The positions of grain measurers, pig weighers, livestock middlemen, and certain other commission agents were reserved for society members, and a portion of each agent's fees was claimed for the coffers of the lodge.⁵³

Another anthropologist who became interested in these groups was Maurice Freedman, whose primary research focused on the lineages and clans of Fujian and Guangdong, and their overseas transplants. In his monograph *Lineage Organization in Southeast China* (1958), Freedman concluded that secret societies “not only cut across lineage organization but also tended to mark the line dividing the rich and influential from the poor and weak in a differentiated lineage.”⁵⁴ He further concluded that though a few officials and gentry may have belonged to these societies, they were basically movements of peasants and the poor.

Freedman also dealt with the functional and symbolic aspects of religion in the societies, which seemed to him “to have provided them less with a driving force than a solemn apparatus for sanctifying rebellion.”⁵⁵ Picking up on Skinner's market-town hypothesis, he noted that “some market towns [in the New Territories] were in fact the centres of Triad Society activity, and the question arises whether we should consider the secret society in southeastern China as an arm of the power by which the group that controlled the market town ... maintained, or sought to maintain, its dominance of the local scene.”⁵⁶ Freedman's analyses, however skillful and refreshing, were based heavily on secondary sources. He made little use of manuscripts either discovered or written by Chinese.

The studies of the Tiandihui in conjunction with mobilization, marketing, and lineage so tentatively begun by Laai Yi-fai, Skinner, and Freedman were given a boost by the rising influence of the Annales school and the turn away from traditional history based on elites and political events.⁵⁷ As scholars like Eric J. Hobsbawm (*Primitive Rebels*; 1959) and Eric Wolf (*Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*; 1969) began to delve into peasant movements, Chinese secret societies took on added importance in sinological studies. This new interest was reflected in, and further stimulated by, a series of conferences and classes convened in the 1960's. Two seminars given by Jean Chesneaux, professor of Modern Chinese History at the Sorbonne, in 1964—65 and 1968—69, attracted participants from around the world. And both the Seventeenth Congress of Chinese Studies held at Leeds, England, in 1965 and the International Congress of Orientalists held at Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1967 included sessions on the phenomenon.

One of the questions that ran throughout the period concerned the nature of Tiandihui uprisings and whether they should be regarded as “rebellions” or “revolutions.” Scholarship turned up the names of a handful of people who constituted an “embryonic Who's Who of the noneminent Chinese of the Qing Period,”⁵⁸ but in this pre-archive era, research was impeded by the poor quality of available resource materials. Nevertheless, Western scholars persevered, and in the early 1970's, three books made their appearance in English.

The first, *Primitive Revolutionaries of China* (1971), originally a thesis in social anthropology submitted to London University by Fei-ling Davis in 1968, is very much a transition piece that did not quite figure out where it was going and as a result suffers from a lack of clarity and muddled insights. Methodologically flawed and interpretively outdated, the book is not highly regarded in scholarly circles today.

According to Davis, the work was intended as a sociological investigation of the Tiandihui during the late Qing and was influenced by both French functionalism and Hobsbawm's theory of social banditry.⁵⁹ Yet, in a manner somewhat reminiscent of her predecessors of the last century. Davis devoted most of her energy to a discussion of the society's origins, purposes, social composition, organization, rituals, and sanctions.

Although it was her intention to focus on the Triads as a model society or hui,⁶⁰ Davis did not confine her discussion to them, but drew from materials on other societies to fill in the gaps in her information on the assumption that what held true for them must have held true for the Tiandihui as well. On more than one occasion, she used the experience of the Nian to substantiate her hypotheses about the Triads.

Although Chinese works are cited in the Bibliography, the book makes but infrequent references to the leading non-Western scholars and is based primarily on the studies of Schlegel, Stanton, and Morgan. For her interpretative framework, Davis coupled Tao Chengzhang's distinction between jiaomen (religious sects) in North China and huidang (political associations) in the South with one of her own, between “orthodox” and “heterodox” sects.⁶¹ Heterodox sects, in her typology, included huidang as well as jiaomen. Contending that “the combination of myth, secret language, oaths, and laws of the secret societies constituted an

efficacious, alternative culture to that of orthodox society,” she noted:

The mobility of Chinese secret societies organizationally opposed them to the assumption of the permanence and immobility which underlie orthodox social and political organization.... They made themselves into a counter-image of the official world.⁶²
...

Although it is probable that many of the Triad societies originated in heterodox religious sects, it is just as likely that heterodox religious duties were deliberately incorporated into the ritual of the Triads for political reasons ... and for distinguishing themselves from orthodox society.⁶³

In supposing the Triads to have originated as an offshoot of the White Lotus Society,⁶⁴ Davis accepted much of the prevailing wisdom of the time, and like her predecessors, she did not refrain from commenting on the Freemason issue as well. But unlike them, she found secret societies less like the Freemasons than like the fraternities of northern Germany, which similarly rendered help in case of personal injury and economic distress; both, she argued, devoted most of their energy to the settlement of disputes, the protection of fellow members, and the defrayment of funeral expenses.⁶⁵

Davis's final thematic point concerned the role of secret societies in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. She credited them with having contributed as much as the 1911 Revolution to the overthrow of the political order and with having become direct agents of structural change.⁶⁶ At the same time, in addressing the nature of society dissidence and responding specifically to Eric Hobsbawm, she concluded that, “although Chinese secret societies were not explicitly revolutionary, they nevertheless bridged the gap between a conventional spontaneous type rebellion and organized rebellion. The secret societies were not primitive rebels but primitive revolutionaries.”⁶⁷

The second of the three books was Jean Chesneaux's *Les Sociétés secrètes en Chine* (1965; translated into English in 1971). Though the book includes certain “official” society documents (such as the Small Swords' proclamation restoring the Ming and the Boxers' anti-Christian manifesto), Chesneaux, like Davis, relied primarily on Western sources.

The book begins with a chapter on the Triads, in which the author set out by questioning the validity of the Xi Lu Legend as an authentic historical source and the viability of “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” as the society's *raison d'être*, but then went on to make sweeping generalizations about secret societies, based on a few examples that leave the reader unsure which statements pertain specifically to the Tiandihui and which do not.⁶⁸

Like Davis, Chesneaux subscribed to Tao Chengzhang's thesis of northern sects (*jiao*) and southern societies (*hui*), and assigned great importance to the latter's historical role. According to him, between 1849 and 1949, “secret societies occupied an important place in Chinese political and social life, influenced the course of events, resisted Western penetration, and ... helped to determine the history of China.”⁶⁹

But on the question of whether or not these groups constituted a total opposition force or were only partially detached from Chinese society, Chesneaux equivocated. On the one hand, he contended that secret societies “were diametrically opposed to the Confucian order and its social conventions,” that they “claimed a rival order to that of emperor and Mandarins,” and that “two inseparable aspects of [their] activities were political opposition to imperial rule and disregard for law and order.”⁷⁰ Yet, at the same time, he argued that these societies were not completely severed from the old order and indeed sometimes cooperated with the government:

Instances also occurred of leaders of secret societies becoming temporarily reconciled with the imperial authorities and even collaborating with them against their former comrades, only to resume their outlaw existence a few years later.⁷¹

Fundamentally, they [secret societies] were not detached from the Chinese ancient regime. They were an opposition force but within the established order: they were an integral part of it, stamped with the same defects and prisoners of the same limitation. Thus, until 1911, their untiring activity achieved nothing more than repeated failures. It could be said that they were an aspect of the functioning of the ancient regime rather than a fundamental alternative to it.⁷²

So far as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are concerned, Chesneaux was of the opinion

that although the secret societies were incapable of overthrowing imperial authority, they were major players in the wave of uprisings that convulsed China between 1850 and 1870. Moreover, beginning with the Opium War, they were, in his view, the organizations best suited to protest the increasing Western penetration of China.⁷³

Chesneaux also believed that the societies cooperated closely with the Tongmenghui during the 1911 Revolution, but that their political influence then waned, particularly after 1919, when they began dividing along urban and rural lines.⁷⁴ With the birth of the labor movement, “the city societies appeared outmoded, their tasks being increasingly shouldered or made unnecessary by more modern organizations. As a result, the urban groups degenerated into occult associations greedy for clandestine profits and ready to attach themselves to the forces of social reaction.”⁷⁵ By contrast, their rural counterparts retained their popular character and continued to play a role in the revolutionary movement as the Communists moved into the countryside during the 1930’s.⁷⁶ After liberation, however, the tables turned once again, as secret societies in general came to be regarded as potential power rivals and a general nuisance to the new regime.

In his conclusion, Chesneaux was one of the first to argue that China scholars must stop thinking in terms of Western societies, pointing out that Chinese societies were clearly neither philosophical-religious organizations like the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons nor sociopolitical organizations like the Mafia.⁷⁷ And as a final judgment, he singled out what seemed to him their greatest weakness: the “backward-looking ideology” that prevented them from tackling the most important problem of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, scientific and technological progress.⁷⁸

The third volume succeeded in overcoming some of the disappointments of the Davis and Chesneaux books. It was an outgrowth of the papers presented in the secret society sessions at the Leeds Congress in July 1965. The new direction was sounded as early as the opening remarks by Jerome Chen who, after calling for the compiling of a comprehensive bibliography of authentic source materials to be used in the study of secret societies, went on to take issue with the traditional division of northern sects and southern societies: “The difference between the *chiao* and *hui* is a matter of degree, of methods, rather than of political aims. To say that religion ... dulled political awareness of the *chiao* is to oversimplify the issue and to attribute the phenomenon to a wrong reason.”⁷⁹ Pronouncing the geographical division theorized by Tao “arbitrary,” Chen held that “the *chiao-hui* division shows a wish to relegate the *chiao* to the ‘feudal’ period, thereby isolating the *hui* as a growth of the period of ‘embryonic capitalism’ of China. The wish, however, springs from a lack of historical perception.”⁸⁰ Chen also spoke at Leeds of the transformation of the secret societies into modern political parties such as the Guomindang but did not expand on the point in the printed version of the talk.

The result of the congress, a volume of twenty-three essays, including a few late submissions, entitled *Mouvements populaires et sociétés secrètes en Chine aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, was published in 1970. Fifteen of the original essays appeared in English translation in 1972 under the title *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China, 1840—1950*, edited by Jean Chesneaux. The following discussion is based on the translated work and touches on only the items of direct relevance to the Tiandihui.

The essays in this volume are more topically focused than those of earlier Western scholars and less preoccupied with specific discussions of rituals, ceremonies, and oaths. Instead of relying on Western sources and accounts drawn primarily from societies in Southeast Asia, these scholars made use of such “official” Chinese sources as local gazetteers in their endeavor to understand specific aspects of society life between the Opium War and liberation. With the publication of this volume, the study of secret societies in the West took an important step forward as authors demonstrated what could be done on the basis of socioeconomic investigation.

In his introductory essay, Chesneaux reiterated many of the ideas discussed above in a more concise format, attempting simply to highlight the ups and downs of secret society activity during the past century. According to Chesneaux:

1. Secret societies constituted forces of opposition.
2. Secret society activities exhibited a tendency toward the primitive accumulation of capital on the part of a class of petty bourgeoisie whose ascension and activity the official system restrained.
3. Secret societies were integrated into the old order and belonged to local history by both their actions and their ideology.
4. Secret societies tended to be ephemeral and to die out when certain local problems had been solved.
5. Secret societies had a complex class character that embodied two lines of class struggle: (a) the

struggle of the bourgeoisie to free itself of feudal economic restraints and (b) the struggle of peasants against their feudal masters.

Chesneaux concluded with the observation that not only were both the Tongmenghui and the Guomindang patterned on the secret societies, but so, too, were the cells of the Communist party.⁸¹

In light of the new interest in the West to explain unrest in nineteenth-century China less in terms of monolithic control or class struggle than as a matter of local mobilization, one of the most interesting essays was Frederic Wakeman's "The Secret Societies of Kwangtung, 1800—1856." This well-researched piece relied on Foreign Office files in the Public Record Office of Great Britain, local gazetteers of China, and secondary accounts from Japan. It was also a by-product of Wakeman's pathbreaking *Strangers at the Gate* (1966), a study of local mobilization as exemplified in Chinese action against the British at Sanyuanli, the subsequent Red Turban rebellion in Canton in 1854, and the gentry-led militias (*tuanlian*) created to put it down. Wakeman's chapter "The Secret Societies of South China" in *Strangers* is one of the best short summaries of the Tiandihui in English.⁸²

In his article, however, Wakeman was concerned not with the Tiandihui as such but with how the gentry, lineage heads, and Triads of Guangdong co-existed within the baojia system and interacted with and opposed one another during the Opium War and the Red Turban rebellion. In analyzing the outcome of the rebellion, Wakeman suggested that the Ming slogans failed the rebels in their attempt to "summon the past to exorcise the present," and that their dream of recovering putative lost glory could unify them only on the eve of action because "in the heat of battle the idea of restoring the Ming seemed implausible to Triads and gentry alike."⁸³

Nevertheless, Wakeman did not dismiss the importance of the claim of Ming restorationism: Ming Restorationism was more than a heroic echo of the past. It gave the Triads political relevance, even providing a form of social respectability that put them a cut above gangsterism.... Thus the raising of a Ming banner provided its own illegitimate "legitimacy." ... If the political universe stood ready for a change, if the omens were right, the mandate was there for the taking. Peasant boys had become emperors before: why not again? ... In its own way this social myth was as potent as the struggling scholar's examination dream. Instead of inspiring individual cultivation, though, it called for mass action.⁸⁴

In his concluding comments on the nature of society dissidence, Wakeman pointed out how the anti-Manchuism of the Red Turbans differed from that of Sun Yat-sen and suggested that the Triad uprisings of the mid-nineteenth century represented a phenomenon more in keeping with traditional Chinese rebellions than with nascent revolution:

Sun's anti-Manchuism was not that of the Red Turbans. Theirs was a dual slogan ("Overthrow the Ch'ing and restore the Ming") designed for a limited end: the preservation of the brotherhood in a Confucian world that they never thought to change. Sun Yat-sen needed only a single goal—overthrow the Ch'ing—and even that was but a means to something larger: the creation of a nation.... The Triad uprisings of the mid-nineteenth century were not the first or second failures in a series of ultimately successful revolutionary coups. Rather, they were the last, or next to last, defeats in a much larger series of traditional rebellions.⁸⁵

In a third article of relevance from the conference volume, "The Anti-Manchu Propaganda of the Triads, ca. 1800—1860," Boris Novikov argued that the periods between uprisings were the ones that determined whether or not a given society would survive, and that propaganda was a critical element in its ability to do so.⁸⁶ Of all the forms of propaganda the societies employed, the most important, according to Novikov, was the slogan "Fan-Qing fu-Ming," and much of his article is given over to examining its meaning from a variety of perspectives. For Novikov, the "original materials of the Triads show convincingly that 'Fan-Qing fu-Ming' was the fundamental purpose of the organization."⁸⁷ But he was also convinced that the overthrow of the Qing in itself had a triple resonance, embracing at once revenge for the burning of Shaolin by the Qing, the determination of those who had experienced the cruelty and injustice of the Qing government to overthrow it, and the desire of the Chinese people to free themselves of an alien regime.⁸⁸

C. A. Curwen posited in his article, "Taiping Relations with Secret Societies and with Other Rebels," that when the Taiping movement was going strong, the rebels felt no particular need for allies and, in fact, probably scorned the unsophisticated secret societies. During such times, the Taiping could dictate the terms under which they would allow the societies to act with them. However, later on, as the rebels'

confidence ebbed, the tables turned, and the Taiping were obliged to seek assistance on weaker terms by allowing society allies to operate under their own banners.

Curwen devoted most of his article to a discussion of the cooperation between the Taiping and the Nian, but in the section dealing specifically with the Triads, like Laai Yi-faai before him, he speculated on the identity of Hong Daquan (Hung Ta-ch'uan). From his research, he concluded that Hong Daquan was a "society brother" of Hong Xiuquan's (Hung Hsiuch' uan), that his real name was Jiao Liang (Chiao Liang), and that he was an official in both the Tiandihui and the Taiping organization.⁸⁹

In an article entitled "Triads, Salt Smugglers, and Local Uprisings: Observations on the Social and Economic Background of the Waichow Revolution of 1911," Winston Hsieh used Skinner's work on centralplace theory and Chinese market economies to investigate the Triad involvement in the Waichow (Huizhou) uprisings of 1911. Hsieh attempted to prove that market towns were the center of secret society activity, and that in Waichow at least, salt smuggling constituted its economic base. More to the point, from our perspective, was his argument for a clear correlation between mobilization patterns and market town size in Chinese uprisings. According to him, local village and militia forces tended to operate in markets or towns at the bottom of the economic hierarchy; Triads tended to operate in the mid-level cities or the standard marketing towns; and insurrections begun by regular government troops tended to take place in the great administrative capitals. Consequently, in his view, the Triad uprisings should be seen as a series of centripetal movements in which insurrectionary forces mobilized first in small towns on the outer ring of a marketing town, then moved upward to the central marketing centers, and from there, to the still-larger urban centers and regional cities.⁹⁰ The discovery of these patterns is significant, Hsieh claimed, because they provide some basis for distinguishing secret society-sponsored forces or uprisings from those mounted by other types of dissident groups.

At the same time, Hsieh linked Triad mobilization to facets of trade and commerce above and beyond the simple market-town level. In particular, he pointed to the connection between Triads and salt smugglers that was activated whenever the government attempted to tighten the salt trade and to the Triads' role in transforming popular protest into collective action. Ultimately, he contended, the Triads provided the "mechanism" for the mobilization of aggrieved salt smugglers into the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui).

Questions of mobilization were also of interest to the historian Philip Kuhn. In his book *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (1970), Kuhn noted the similarities and differences between various "orthodox" and "heterodox" groups in Chinese society and used social science methodology to investigate the mobilization patterns of the "heterodox" in their endeavors to stage rebellion and of the "orthodox" in their attempts to put it down. Each side, he found, used remarkably similar methods. The result was a distinct parallelism in the hierarchies of mobilization called into being by each. For example, heterodox mobilization, according to Kuhn, progressed through three hierarchical stages:

1. Secret society lodges (*tang*), "organizations that, while secret and illegitimate, were inseparable parts of ordinary, everyday society. They existed not as groups cut off from the normal order of life, ... but as functioning parts of local society."⁹¹
2. More permanent or semipermanent gangs (*gu*) of roving bandits that were distinguished from *tang* by their greater separation from society, their greater professionalism, and their greater mobility.
3. Fully mobilized communities at arms such as those in existence during the Taiping Rebellion.

Similarly, the "enemies of rebellion" or forces of "orthodoxy" manifested three hierarchical stages of mobilization that moved progressively from (1) ad hoc village militias, or *tuanlian*, to (2) mercenaries, or *yong*, hired on a more or less permanent basis, which were distinguished from militia by greater mobility and professionalism, to (3) regional armies of the kind founded by Zeng Guofan or Li Hongzhang, which also represented a kind of community at arms.⁹² From these structural similarities, Kuhn concluded that the terms "tang" and "tuan" were at times "really superficial distinctions applied to organizations that were structurally indistinguishable and politically indeterminate."⁹³ These shared traits, according to Kuhn, explain both the ease with which secret society or *tang* leaders could infiltrate orthodox defense associations and the ease with which the forces of opposition could be coopted by the state.

Specialists in the 1911 Revolution also took a new interest in the secret societies in the 1960's and 1970's. Mary Wright accorded them a high place in the Introduction to her now-classic anthology, *China in Revolution* (1968), pronouncing them the "only organizations seemingly in a position to lead a popular revolution of the disaffected elements from the lower strata."⁹⁴ Her colleague Mary Rankin, in telling the story of how the intellectuals made contacts with secret society members, brought to light many aspects of

the societies' composition, leadership, relations with the gentry, and infiltration of local defense groups such as tuanlian or regional armies.⁹⁵

Two other students of the period, Harold Z. Schiffrin and Joseph Esherick, likewise gave the matter some attention in their studies of the revolution. The one was concerned with the Triads' role in the Waichow uprising of 1900, and the other with the secret societies' participation in the Liuyang-Liliang region of Hunan and the Pingxian environs of Jiangxi.⁹⁶

1980—1990: The Influence of the Archives

A new period in Western studies of Chinese secret societies opened with the conference on Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China, held at Montecito, California, in August 1981, where David Faure introduced Western audiences to the new discoveries turned up by the Chinese scholars Zhuang Jifa and Qin Baoqi. On the basis of their research on the Tiandihui, Faure took issue with those who had previously argued that secret societies were necessarily rebellious or that their organizations necessarily promoted rebellion. In his conference paper, Faure also reiterated several points he had made in previous articles, to wit:

1. The Tiandihui organization constituted a network of individual units almost totally divorced from one another.
2. The Tiandihui spread not as a unified organization, but as a set of rituals and traditions in which the initiation ceremony itself served as a method of recruitment.
3. Very strong religious overtones attached to the recruitment and initiation processes.
4. For most members, sedition or the overthrow of the government was not the primary reason for participation in the society.
5. Nevertheless, groups said to be affiliated with the Tiandihui, though autonomous, subscribed to a belief in a common ancestry that originated from an anti-Manchu tradition.
6. The society's Xi Lu Legend appears to be the result of the merging of several different stories.
7. As the years passed, the Tiandihui became increasingly associated with criminal activities.⁹⁷

Another participant in the conference, Wen-hsiung Hsu, focused more specifically on the development of inter- and intracommunal organizations in Taiwan during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a means of coping with society and social dissidence. In his view, intercommunal protection societies, created by consolidating hamlets, villages, and wards, took shape in order to stave off popular uprisings and feuds; intracommunal associations, by contrast, were charged with settling vagrants and preventing banditry and gambling.⁹⁸

Though Hsu did not take up the point here, he had earlier examined social dissidence in Taiwan during the Qing as a phenomenon of the frontier society. According to him, sixty-eight uprisings broke out on the island during the 212 years of Qing rule there. Most occurred between 1787 and 1862, when frontier conditions were at their height, and sworn brotherhoods were behind at least twenty-seven of them; ten were actually led by society members.⁹⁹

Virtually none of these secret society uprisings, according to Hsu, were motivated by Ming restorationism:

During the uprisings, neither sworn brotherhoods nor secret societies espoused egalitarianism, upheld ideology, or expressed demands for economic reforms. Indeed, the dynamic role of the Heaven and Earth Society in the making of the revolts was organizational. Its rules aimed at forming a cohesive covenanted group but were not directed against the government. Although the society's avowed political goal was believed to be "oppose the Ch'ing and restore the Ming," only its 1853 revolt ever raised this slogan. The sworn brotherhoods and secret societies, after all, were not political groups originally attempting to seize power. Normally these two groups did not become politicized until after government troops were dispatched to search for their members.¹⁰⁰

After the Montecito conference, American scholars began plumbing the National Palace Museum archives in Taipei and the First Historical Archives in Beijing for themselves in the hope of locating still more

materials on the Tiandihui. The fruits of their labor were presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in 1989, in a session entitled “Secret Societies and Archival Disclosure: New Perspectives on the Tiandihui,” conducted by Robert Antony, David Ownby, Wen-hsiung Hsu, and Dian Murray. Those presentations, along with contributions from Qin Baoqi and Zhuang Jifa, were summarized in Chapters One and Two.

The Tiandihui in Chinese Historiography

One of the most striking and, sometimes to Western audiences, curious aspects of Chinese historiography during the last eighty years has been its preoccupation with the nature and origin of the Tiandihui. During this period, Chinese scholars have carried out almost continuous research and produced at least a dozen conflicting hypotheses about the where and when of the society's creation, its founders, and its creed; the debate rages on today.

In part, this division of scholarly opinion can be ascribed to the fact that over the past century the origins question has been closely intertwined with various political struggles. In trying to use the Tiandihui for their own benefit, certain groups have been wont to attribute to it characteristics not borne out by the historical record, but ones in which they have a vested interest and defend with tenacity.

The aim here is to trace the development of this debate. By way of introduction, it is important to note that the Tiandihui was not a subject of interest to the historians or literati of the Qing dynasty, and that, as a result, we find surprisingly little mention of it in their collected works and essays, let alone a full volume or monograph. As we have seen, the society's existence did not even come to the attention of Qing officials until early 1787, during the Lin Shuangwen rebellion in Taiwan.¹

The Tiandihui and the 1911 Revolution

Chinese interest in the Tiandihui as subject for historical research dates from the 1911 Revolution. So do the attempts to endow the society with certain useful political characteristics. As Sun Yat-sen and his contemporaries sought to garner financial support from overseas Chinese communities and to develop an organizational base inside China, they were quick to recognize that the obvious vehicles for this purpose were the Triads (or Tiandihui), who were not only enormously influential abroad but also, along with the White Lotus sect, one of the only two bodies capable of anything like a national influence within China itself.²

Sun Yat-sen first turned his attention specifically to the Tiandihui on discovering its strength in the overseas communities of Southeast Asia and America. In the Straits Settlements alone, it was estimated that no fewer than nine-tenths of the colony's several hundred thousand Chinese were Triad members.³ Likewise, between 80 percent and 90 percent of the Chinese in the United States, or from 70,000 to 80,000 people, belonged to the chapter or lodge known as the Zhigongtang.⁴ In fact, Sun was told that if he expected to receive contributions from the American Chinese, he had better join a lodge himself, which he promptly did.⁵

Within China, the revolutionaries soon discovered that their most dependable allies lay among the soldiers in the new armies, most of whom were members of the Tiandihui, the Small Knife Society, or the Elder Brothers Society.⁶ The revolutionaries were also convinced that to carry out a national movement, they would have to depend on the Elder Brothers Society, which at that time was said to have a membership of not under 100,000 in the Yangtze region between Sichuan and Jiangsu alone, and was erroneously believed to be an offshoot of the Tiandihui.⁷

So far as the 1911 revolutionaries were concerned, then, no matter whether they were mobilizing from inside the country or among the overseas Chinese without, the Tiandihui's support was essential.⁸ But they soon found that their pleas were falling on deaf ears. It turned out that local organizations had their own agendas and were not much interested in driving out the Manchus.⁹

On the domestic front, despite a long tradition of anti-foreignism and of activities that were sometimes blindly xenophobic, these groups usually targeted their efforts against European rather than Manchu foreigners. As a result, the revolutionaries, who took great pains not to upset the Europeans and Americans, from whom they were seeking political and financial support, first had to transform the societies' "Expel the

foreigner” (*Paiwai zongzhi*) creed into the more specific cry, “Expel the Manchu” (*Pai-Man zongzhi*).¹⁰

Overseas, the revolutionaries had a different problem. In general, the Tiandihui groups were mutual aid associations with few if any political overtones, especially in their relationships to China. Their primary function was to help poorly educated and impoverished immigrants to acclimate to their new environments. Most society members were unaware of the history of their organizations, the manner in which these related to the Tiandihui in China, and their alleged anti-Manchu tradition. Few knew any of the society’s myths, legends, and poems.

Thus, if Sun was going to use the Tiandihui for his own ends, he would first have to create an anti-Manchu consciousness among its members. This he tried to do by exhorting his countrymen to recall the Manchus’ slaughter of Han Chinese at the time of the Qing conquest and the nearly 300 years of oppression that had ensued thereafter.¹¹ He next needed to arouse interest in political insurrection and to portray the Tiandihui as a revolutionary organization with a long tradition. This he tried to do by enjoining members to recall the story of their origin contained in the Xi Lu Legend.

But endowing the Tiandihui with a revolutionary pedigree was easier said than done, for when taken at face value, the Xi Lu Legend does not support a very strong anti-Manchu tradition. The actions recounted in it have nothing to do with the national struggle between the Chinese and the Manchus. Its major heroes, the Shaolin monks, had once been staunch supporters of the Qing. Their subsequent hatred of the Qing stemmed only from the government’s heedless destruction of their temple and not from any incipient racial or nationalist sentiment. Moreover, General Chen Jinnan, a key figure in the legend who was often credited with founding the Tiandihui, was said to be a former Qing official of Hanlin Academy background. His anti-government stance had little if anything to do with Chinese nationalism.

To give the organization credibility as an anti-Manchu body, consequently, Sun Yat-sen and his colleagues had to come up with a founding date of no later than the early Kangxi period (1662—1722), by which time the most strident Ming Loyalism had already been either suppressed or coopted by the new state. It is here, in the endeavor to find a revolutionary past, that the Chinese preoccupation with the Tiandihui’s origins began and the differences in opinion arose.

The first in a long line of people to engage this question was Tao Chengzhang, a fellow revolutionary, contemporary, and competitor of Sun Yat-sen’s.¹² The most important revolutionary figure in Zhejiang between 1904 and 1905, Tao had returned from abroad in 1903 specifically to organize the societies of his native province into a revolutionary force. Though the groups he worked with were mainly offshoots of the Tiandihui that had been founded after the Taiping Rebellion,¹³ Tao linked them to an earlier day, when certain Chinese, unwilling to resign themselves to the Manchu conquest, had formed the Hong League to restore the country. (Before the introduction of the Western term “secret society” into the Chinese lexicon by Hirayama Shū, whose contributions will be discussed below, Tao and his contemporaries generally used the term “Hongmen,” or “Hong League,” for the Tiandihui and all its offshoots.) It was also Tao Chengzhang who first thought to link the term Hong to the dynastic founder of the Ming. According to him, “Hong” referred to the first emperor’s reign title, Hongwu (1368—98). As for the name Tiandihui, or Heaven and Earth Association, it had come about because members of the Hong League referred to Heaven as their father and Earth as their mother.

Because the league’s founding aim was to “overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming,” Tao Chengzhang explained, members wrote certain characters referring to the Manchus in special abbreviated ways: 洲 instead of 清 for Qing, and 滿 instead of 滿 for Manchu. The omission of the top part of the character for qing (埶), which alone makes zhu, meaning “master” or “overlord,” symbolized the anticipated loss of Manchu overlordship; the omission of the top part of the character for Manchu symbolized that the Manchus would lose their heads.¹⁴

Tao Chengzhang was also the first of many to impute the founding of the Tiandihui to Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), the anti-Manchu piratepatriot who seized Taiwan from the Dutch in 1661.¹⁵ But he claimed that the man who really set the society in motion was Chen Jinnan, thus tying its founding into the Xi Lu Legend. Although the name Chen Jinnan does not appear in the historical record, Tao Chengzhang’s remarks touched off a major quest as subsequent scholars endeavored to match the legendary figure to his “real” counterpart.¹⁶

Another of Tao Chengzhang’s most enduring contributions was his division of popular associations into *jiao* and *hui*. *Jiao* were northern religious sects, of which the White Lotus Society was the most prevalent; *hui* were southern secular associations, of which the Tiandihui was the most prevalent. Much of Tao’s most famous article “Jiaohui yuanliukao” (Examination of the origin and development of secret religious

societies) is devoted to an explanation of how these two groups arose within China: the White Lotus after the fall of the Song dynasty, and the Heaven and Earth Association after the Manchu conquest.¹⁷ (Before the Chinese picked up the term “secret society,” Tao and his contemporaries also referred to the Tiandihui and its counterparts by the “generic” term *huidang*, thereby lending a political connotation of party or political association to the term hui.)¹⁸

Finally, Tao Chengzhang held that the Tiandihui began in Fujian province, the site of some of the most intense anti-Manchu resistance and most ruthless slaughter, and then spread to Zhejiang. There, he suggested, it played a prominent part in the early-eighteenth-century insurrection of Zhang Nianyi, who rose up from the mountain base of Dalan in eastern Zhejiang and formed an alliance with secret society members based in the west.¹⁹

A somewhat different view was put forth in 1911 by Zhang Taiyan (Zhang Bingling), who believed that the Tiandihui sprang up in Fujian as a result of the exchanges back and forth between Zheng Chenggong on Taiwan and his followers on the mainland, and was actually brought into being by Zheng’s loyal officials as they prepared to restore the dynasty.²⁰

In 1917, Sun Yat-sen added a new color to the picture by portraying the Tiandihui as the vehicle used by Ming Loyalists of the Kangxi era to hand down the “sprouts of nationalism” to the masses. According to Sun, up till then, Ming Loyalists had sworn not to serve the Qing as officials and had even led uprisings against the new dynasty, but when it became apparent that their mission had failed, two or three of the most prescient, recognizing that there was no way to restore the fallen dynasty, created a society through which to pass on their “nationalism” to later generations. As a result, “overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming” became the Tiandihui’s founding creed.²¹

Later, in 1924, Sun Yat-sen elaborated upon this theme in his *Three Principles of the People*. By his account, when the Qing army defeated the Ming and entered China, Ming Loyalists established resistance movements in many places. The movement however, lost steam as the Manchus consolidated their rule, and by the end of the reign, one faction of Loyalists, realizing that their strength was spent, and that there was no way to restore the Ming, took measures to organize a society (*huidang*) to preserve the nation. But as it became apparent that the court was moving to counter the opposition by using the examination system to draw as many of the pro-Ming scholars as possible into the net of government, a handful of the Loyalists who were still imbued with “nationalist thought” came to feel that scholars could no longer be depended on to perpetuate the nationalist struggle and so turned their organizing efforts to the lower classes, including the vagabonds of the rivers and lakes.²²

For all his energy and enthusiasm, Sun Yat-sen was not a scholar, and he based his analysis on the hearsay of fellow revolutionaries who were society members, scattered accounts by British and Dutch civil servants, and the writings of Hirayama Shū (c. Zhou Pingshan), a Japanese who had participated extensively in Chinese revolutionary movements before 1911 and who was the first of the Xingzhonghui (Revive China Society) members to establish contact with the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society).²³

In 1912, the first Chinese translation of Hirayama Shu’s landmark book, *History of Chinese Secret Societies*, appeared in Shanghai. The book devoted a chapter each to the White Lotus, Tiandihui, Sanhehui (Triad), Gelaohui, Xingzhonghui, Tongmenghui, and Guangfu gonghui. Although it combined collections of society documents with a narration of society activities, it cannot be regarded as a definitive history. There is little investigation of either the organizational structure or the beliefs of these societies or of the influences of religion, culture, or nationalism on them.²⁴ The Tiandihui chapter is devoted to an elaborate version of the Xi Lu Legend, but Hirayama’s analytical remarks, including his contention that the Tiandihui was organized in the thirteenth year of the Kangxi reign (1674) by the Shaolin priests out of a desire to avenge the burning of their monastery, are in fact contained in a different chapter, the one on the Sanhehui.²⁵

In sum, the political exigencies of 1911 compelled the revolutionaries to develop an interest in the origins of the Tiandihui and to portray it as a key element in the early Chinese resistance against the Manchus. In playing up the Tiandihui as a nationalist revolutionary body founded by Ming Loyalists for the purpose of “overthrowing the Qing,” they gave rise to certain perceptions regarding the origins of the Tiandihui that have had a profound impact on scholarship down to this day.

The revolutionaries themselves, however, were unable to determine whether the Tiandihui had been created by Ming Loyalists of the Zheng Chenggong or Kangxi eras or even by Zheng Chenggong himself. In proceeding from the belief that their contemporary needs had been anticipated in the founding of the Tiandihui, they constructed their histories on a shaky base. (Hereafter their views will be referred to as the “traditional” or “conventional” model for the founding of the Tiandihui.)

1920—1949: The Search for Evidence

For the next generation of scholars, the self-appointed task became to search out evidence that would support the National Father's statements and address more specifically the question of a founding date. The problem, as they soon discovered, was that given the resources at hand, there was little evidence to be found. Nowhere in the official materials that were gradually becoming available to them—the *Qingshigao* (Draft history of the Qing dynasty), published in 1927—28; the *Da-Qing lichao shilu* (Veritable records of the successive reigns of the Qing dynasty), published in 1937; and the various law codes and statutes—was there a reference to a Xi Lu invasion or to the Shaolin priests having aided the Kangxi Emperor. Moreover, since the term Tiandihui was nowhere to be seen in documents written before the Qianlong era, how were they to date the society back to the Kangxi reign?

In the circumstances, these scholars did what they could with what they had, namely, versions of the Xi Lu Legend and other Tiandihui documents published by either Western colonial scholars or Japanese. Hearsay provided the basis for the elaboration that the pioneer of the second generation, Lian Heng, brought to his predecessors' theories concerning the society's founding by Zheng Chenggong. In his 1920 history of Taiwan, Lian argued that Tiandihui legends contained veiled references to its having been created by the Yanping Prince (Zheng Chenggong) for the purpose of "Fan-Qing fu-Ming." But in trying to account for these references, he could do no more than say that, according to what he had heard, the Yanping Prince, after conquering Taiwan, and afraid that his followers would forget their motherland and the Ming dynasty, created the Tiandihui with himself as the head and Ming restorationism as its creed.²⁶

Feng Ziyou also looked to the society's legends for proof of its Kangxi origins. In his *Geming yishi* (Anecdotes of the Revolution), published in 1928, he reiterated the Sun Yat-sen hypothesis: that the Hongmen was created by two or three Ming Loyalists of the Kangxi era, who, after realizing the futility of their desire to restore the overthrown dynasty, looked to secret societies as a means of transmitting their "nationalist thought" to later generations. Feng also reiterated Tao Chengzhang's claim that the Hong League's founding aim was to "overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming," and like Tao, he buttressed the claim by pointing to the members' use of abbreviated characters for the Manchus and their dynasty. He too espied veiled references in the society's legendary founders, linking Zhu Hongzhu, Chen Jinnan, and Wan Yunlong to Zheng Chenggong and his general Zhang Huangyan, who did not approve of the move to Taiwan, and believed that the society was founded at the Shaolin temple in Fujian province.²⁷

Such methods of elaboration by way of hearsay and speculation were not very satisfying, so in 1929, Wen Xiongfei tried to substantiate Tao Chengzhang's theory of Zheng Chenggong-as-founder through a more systematic exploration of the Xi Lu Legend. Although Wen did not accept the legend at face value, since there was no real place called Xi Lu and no written record of the Shaolin priests having actually aided the Kangxi Emperor, he did believe that it provided clear hints about the historical creation of the society and was thus filled with "deep significance."

Though he sharply criticized those who took myths or legends that were by their very nature "preposterous" and "ahistorical" for fact, Wen was convinced that these had historical value for those who knew how to ferret out their meaning. To this end, he proposed a new method for investigating the problem. Wen's method, based on "inference" (*yingshe*), called for enlightened speculation about specific historical incidents alluded to in the creation legend. Although he admitted that the inference method would not yield absolute proof on the society's founding, he was confident that his results would be closer to the truth than the farfetched interpretations of his predecessors.²⁸

According to Wen, what the legend depicted in mythological form was the real history of the Zheng family. By way of illustration, he explained that one could infer that the residents of Shaolin temple were the family and followers of Zheng Chenggong's father, Zheng Zhilong, and that the Shaolin monks' expedition against the Xi Lu referred to Second Captain Zheng Zhilong's assistance to the Manchus in evacuating his troops from the Xianxia Pass, thereby enabling them to invade and conquer Fujian; the burning of the Shaolin temple (by Qing troops) and the slaughter of its priests, despite their assistance to the emperor in repelling the Xi Lu, were veiled references to the betrayal of Zheng Zhilong and his family by the Qing court, which forced them to Beijing and subsequently executed them; and the so-called Five Ancestors, or the monks who survived the destruction of the Shaolin monastery, were the followers of Zheng Zhilong, men of different surnames who swore a blood oath of brotherhood and vowed to avenge his death.

Wen was persuaded that the Tiandihui was founded in Taiwan, and that the Xi Lu characters had their historical counterparts among the surviving members and associates of the Zheng family who fled there. The society's "elder brother," Wan Yunlong, who according to the legend had the idea of founding the

society but was not much involved in organizing it, referred to Zheng Chenggong himself; Chen Jinnan, the society founder in some versions of the legend, was a veiled reference to Chen Yonghua, one of Zheng Chenggong's chief military leaders, who was the actual founder of the historical Tiandihui; and the Ming scion Zhu Hongzhu (sometimes called Zhu Hongying), who was chosen to lead the uprising recounted in the legend, referred to either the Southern Ming Prince Yongli of Guangxi or the Southern Ming Prince Longwu of Fujian.

Because some versions of the Xi Lu Legend hold that the society was founded in the *jiayin* year, Wen Xiongfei (along with Hirayama Shu, Luo Ergang, and He Zhiqing) assumed that the reference was to 1674, or the thirteenth year of the Kangxi reign, and therefore pronounced “the origin or founding of the society in Kangxi *jiayin* year ... believable.”²⁹ But that date posed a dilemma for him, because both Zheng Chenggong and the Yongli Prince had died several years earlier, in 1662. To get around this, Wen drew a distinction between the formal swearing of a blood oath in 1674 and the process leading up to it, work that had been begun much earlier by Zheng Chenggong and Yongli and their descendants. The figure he settled on as the actual founder, General Chen Yonghua, did not die until 1680.³⁰

Other historians soon began imitating Wen Xiongfei's methods of inquiry, and in 1935, Mao Yiheng used that approach to link the uprising in the Xi Lu Legend to the rebellion of Yang Qilong in 1673 (but, curiously, made no mention of the simultaneous and larger rebellion of Wu Sangui). Like Wen, Mao doubted the validity of the Xi Lu Legend on its face, and decided that since there was no mention of a Zhu Hongying (or Zhu Hongzhu) in the official histories, the allusion was to the rebel Yang Qilong. Mao also linked the legend's Five Ancestors to the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, contending that the *wu* in his reign title, Hongwu, had the same sound as the *wu* in the Chinese term *wuzu*, meaning “five ancestors.” Mao found further support for this link in a priestly connection, noting that like the legendary Five Ancestors, Emperor Hongwu (Zhu Yuanzhang) had been a priest before seizing the Dragon Throne.³¹

In the same year (1935), the historian Xiao Yishan praised “inference” as a “completely admirable” method that could be regarded as a “blueprint” for researching the origins of the Tiandihui, but went on to state that he did not agree with some of the specific inferences drawn by Wen Xiongfei.³² Among other things, he thought Wen was mistaken in linking Zheng Chenggong to the legendary figure Wan Yunlong. His candidate was Zhang Nianyi, a man who, like Wan Yunlong, was a monk and who had also led an insurrection (in 1707 in the Dalan Mountain region near Ningpo). Xiao based his choice on the account of Zhang's activities in the *Donghualu* of Kangxi 47 (1708), but in order to make him into a monk, like Tao Chengzhang before him, he had to take Zhang Nianyi and Monk Yinian as the same person.³³

The historian Luo Ergang took a different approach, looking to the Qing legal codes to substantiate the founding date of 1674.³⁴ To Luo, the greatest proof of the Tiandihui's origins in the Kangxi era was the fact that neither the Yuan nor the Ming dynasty had ever prohibited the swearing of blood brotherhood by people of mixed surnames. Since this provision first entered the legal code in the Kangxi era, Luo reasoned, it must have been a response to the emergence of the Tiandihui and its activities (even though, as he himself admitted, the name Tiandihui was nowhere to be found in the statute and did not appear in the legal code until 1792).³⁵ Luo also found convincing evidence in the provision itself, which fixed the penalties for participating in such associations based on the number of people involved, whether a blood oath was sworn, and the age of the chosen leaders (a youthful leader was of particular concern as a possible dynastic pretender).³⁶

Luo's theory had one insuperable problem: this provision did not date from the Kangxi era. His claimed source, the *Da-Qing lǐlǐ*, juan 23, of the Kangxi period, simply does not exist. Indeed, there was no such provision in any of the legal compilations of either the Kangxi or the Yongzheng era.³⁷ The statute Luo quoted in fact dated from 1774, was enacted in response to the case of Chen Agao from Jieyang County, Guangdong, and was taken from juan 23 of the *Da-Qing lǐlǐ tongkao* of 1886 (Guangxu 12).³⁸

Luo Ergang also used the appearance of a new section entitled “Reviving [*fuxing*] the Tiandihui” in the revised Qing code of 1792 to support the 1674 founding date. According to him, the term “*fuxing*” indicated that there had been a great lapse of time between the society's founding and the “revival” referred to in the statute; hence the 1674 date was wholly plausible.³⁹

Luo tried to strengthen his case further by demonstrating that the Tiandihui was strongly influenced by the novel *Shuihuzhuan*, whose popularity among the masses dated from the late Ming. Not only did the novel provide the inspiration for the Tiandihui's name, songs, poems, and ritual practices, he suggested, but the similarities between the society and the “Brotherhood of the Water Margin” were plain: both represented themselves as classless associations based on loyalty and equality, both referred to their

meeting places as “loyalty halls,” and both were founded on the idea of people of different surnames forming one family.

For all these reasons, Luo Ergang concluded that the Tiandihui was created in 1674, and that it constituted a multi-surname organization based on loyalty whose aim was to carry out a secret “three dot” revolution by uprooting the Qing. (The three dots referred to the water radical in the character for Qing and, according to Luo, were also the genesis of the Three Dot Society [Sandianhui].)⁴⁰

By 1930, the documentary evidence at hand had been well explored, and the Xi Lu Legend thoroughly combed for hidden references to the origins of the Tiandihui, but, as we have just seen, the result was widely diverging explanations. Plagued by a dearth of historical evidence, scholars launched a search for new sources. The pioneer in this endeavor was Xiao Yishan who, in the face of little data at home, set out in 1932 to seek them abroad. Success awaited him at the British Museum, where he discovered a cache of materials that had been gathered by a Mrs. Ball of Hong Kong. Among them were several copybooks filled with poems, songs, rituals, and legends.⁴¹ Three years later, he published four of these documents—the “Hongmen xiaoyin” (Short passage on the Hongmen); the “Xi Lu Xu Shi” (Xi Lu narration; hereafter shortened to “Narration”); the “Xi Lu Xu” (Xi Lu Preface, or “Preface”); and the “Taolijian xu” (Peach, li, and sword account)—in his book *Jindai mimi shehui shiliao* (Historical materials on modern secret societies).⁴² The Narration and the Preface give differing versions of the legend; both probably date from the late Xianfeng (1851—61) or early Tongzhi period (1862—74).

As Xiao Yishan was plumbing the archives of the British Museum, two similar documents were unearthed in China. These were published in 1943 in Luo Ergang’s book *Tiandihui wenxianlu* (Bibliographical studies of sources on the Tiandihui).⁴³ The first to turn up, in the early 1930’s, was a copybook known as the Gui County Manuscript; it was discovered at Qintang in Gui county, Guangxi, by the county’s Office of Gazetteer Revision as the staff was gathering materials for a new edition of the local gazetteer. On more than one occasion, Gui county had come under the control of Tiandihui rebels, and the copybook, found in an earthen jar buried near a river, has been associated with one Chen Kai, who ruled the area under the dynastic title “Da chengguo” in 1855.⁴⁴ The copybook is divided into four parts: a “preface,” which presents still another version of the Xi Lu Legend; a section of commemorative pictures or plates; a presentation of the initiation ceremony or catechism; and a series of poems and couplets.

The second discovery, also entitled “Xi Lu Preface,” was unearthed in Guangzhou in the Shouxian pavilion of the Hakka family of Luo Han (also known as Luo Xianglin). It was published in 1937 in the first volume of the *Guangzhou xuebao* (Canton Journal).⁴⁵ Like the Gui County Manuscript, this Shouxian Manuscript is believed to date from the Xianfeng period (1851—61); it contains many of the secret poems, songs, rhymes, codes, and symbols of the Tiandihui, as well as still another version of the Xi Lu Legend.

In keeping with the trends of their times, Xiao Yishan and Luo Ergang used their discoveries to substantiate the claims of Sun Yat-sen. Xiao Yishan prefaced his book with hagiographic references to Sun’s accomplishments as a revolutionary and portrayed the Tiandihui as China’s first nationalist revolutionary body.⁴⁶ Likewise, Luo Ergang announced that all the documents unearthed by the Gazetteer Revision Office of Gui county and reproduced in his book were to be regarded as support for Sun’s theories on the origins of the Hong League.⁴⁷

Yet what these documents actually said and what their compilers hoped they said were sometimes two very different things. For much as Xiao Yishan might have wanted to begin his book with an even stronger tribute to Sun Yat-sen’s early-Qing hypothesis, the documents he discovered would not allow it.

The problem was chronological. In all versions of the legend, the Shaolin priests’ repelling of the Xi Lu invasion preceded the formation of the Tiandihui by several years. There had been no difficulty in this in the earlier available materials, which merely stated that the invasion occurred during the Kangxi reign, and that the swearing of the oath, which marked the founding of the society, took place in the “jiayin year” (e.g., the register, or *huibu*, of Yao Dagao) or in the “jiayin year of the Kangxi reign” (as in the Gui County Manuscript). But Xiao’s documents specified that the invasion took place in the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign,⁴⁸ and for those seeking the origins of the Tiandihui in the early Kangxi era, this created a twofold problem. First, the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign, Kangxi 53 or 1714, can in no way be regarded as early Kangxi or even early Qing. Second, if that date was correct, the Tiandihui could hardly have been founded in 1674, the *jiayin*, or thirteenth year of the Kangxi reign, in response to the invasion.

Xiao resolved the problem by hypothesizing that the *jiayin* year in question was not that of the Kangxi reign but that of the Yongzheng reign, or 1734 (YZ 12). But unwilling to relinquish his belief that the

Tiandihui originated in the early Qing, Xiao, like Wen Xiongfei before him, circumvented the obvious by hastening to add that “although the Tiandihui was probably already in existence during the Kangxi era, it did not yet have a very formal organizational structure, which took shape only after 1734.”⁴⁹

From the historical circumstances of the Kangxi era, Xiao Yishan further concluded that the Tiandihui was organized by family members and followers of Zheng Chenggong, and that it originated in Fujian’s seacoast regions, where the Zheng family influence was strong, but he also cautioned against ascribing all its legends to the Zheng family itself.

In his refutation of Wen Xiongfei, Xiao used the “inference method” to argue that the Xi Lu Legend can be divided into three main sections, each inspired by different events of the Kangxi and Yongzheng eras, which were later merged into one integrated tale:⁵⁰

i. It was not the legendary figure Wan Yunlong who should be linked to Zheng Zhilong (father of the famous “patriot” Zheng Chenggong), Xiao suggested, but Zheng Junda, the general (*zongzhen*) of Huguang mentioned in both the Preface and the Hirayama version who by imperial order was forced to commit suicide. According to Xiao, Junda’s sudden and unjust death was a symbolic reference to the death of Zheng Zhilong after his betrayal by the Qing. As further support for his thesis, Xiao noted that besides their common surname, both Junda and Zhilong resided in Fujian, held military office, were exterminated by the Qing, and had wives who committed suicide to preserve their honor. Although Xiao agreed with Wen Xiongfei that the historical figure Chen Yonghua formed an association for revenge from the survivors and underlings of the Zheng family, he was not convinced that what Chen founded was the Tiandihui or that his legendary counterpart was Chen Jinnan.

2. As noted above, Xiao’s candidate for the legendary character Wan Yunlong was Zhang Nianyi (whom he equated with Monk Yinian). Xiao argued his case on the grounds that both were priests, that both were killed resisting the Qing, that both were from Zhejiang, and that the “Heavenly Virtue” reign title used by Zhang Nianyi was adopted by several leaders of subsequent Tiandihui uprisings. As for Zhu Hongzhu (Zhu Hongying), the Ming scion proclaimed as the spiritual leader of the rebellion in the legend, Xiao thought the reference was to the Zhusan Prince, after whom Monk Yinian’s “Zhusan taizi” uprising of 1707 was named, not one of the Southern Ming princes, as Wen Xiongfei suggested.⁵¹ Although Xiao believed that the 1707 uprising influenced the “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” ideology of the later Tiandihui, he maintained that the slogan did not become a central focus of the Xi Lu Legend until the Yongzheng period. The fact that “nationalist revolutionary” participants in the “Zhusan taizi” uprising, such as Monk Yinian and Zhu Yigui, all shared the same thought or ideology was, for Xiao Yishan, further proof of a connection between Zhu Hongzhu and the rebellion of 1707.

3. Finally, according to Xiao, the burning of the Shaolin temple and the organizing of the Tiandihui by priests bore a marked similarity to the popular tales that circulated among the “river and lakes” people in the Yongzheng period and centered around priests and others who formed brotherhoods for revenge. Because of the strength of the Tiandihui among the people of the “rivers and lakes” (marginal social classes), Xiao Yishan believed that their tales had become the focal point of the entire legend.

Convinced that the Xi Lu Legend evolved gradually to absorb historical events, Xiao Yishan concluded his essay by stating that though it was not wrong to say the Tiandihui was formed in the late Kangxi or the Yongzheng period, it was a mistake to fix the date at 1674 (KX 13) because at that time members of the Zheng family still occupied Taiwan. From there, they could have formed an open and public society and thus would have had no need for a secret one.⁵²

1937—1949: Some New Directions

“Now that scholars inside China have begun to read documents relating to the Tiandihui, there is bound to be a climate in which the study of Chinese secret societies will gradually unfold,” Luo Ergang wrote optimistically in the preface to his book.⁵³ But the outbreak of the war with Japan (1937—45) and the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists (1946—49) interrupted research and in the view of some scholars set back serious academic work on the Tiandihui by a decade.

The war years spawned a spate of Tiandihui-related books for popular consumption that emphasized the historic contributions of the secret societies to the nation’s patriotic causes. Also highlighted was their relationship to Sun Yat-sen and the Guomindang. On the whole more legend than history, these accounts constituted a patriotic call for anti-Japanese resistance on the part of political parties trying to woo the societies’ support in their own power struggles.⁵⁴

By the time scholarship resumed in the late 1940’s, the Guomindang had a strong vested interest in the

origins question, for it had openly acknowledged its debt to the Tiandihui and traced its own emergence from secret society circles. As a result, scholars held fast to the idea that the Tiandihui first appeared as a nationalist political organization during the late Ming or early Qing.

Two hypotheses were now put forward. One new theory was advanced in 1947 by Zhou Yibai, a historian who later moved to Taiwan. Like his predecessors, Zhou relied on the inference method developed by Wen Xiongfei, but his inferences moved the discussion of the Tiandihui's origins in a very different direction. After reading the historical account of General Lin Xingzhu's participation in the Yakesa campaign against the Russians in 1689, Zhou suggested that the Tiandihui was founded by the "rattan-shield soldiers" (*tengpaibing*), a force of 500 men from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, Fujian, drafted by the Kangxi Emperor to fight the Russians. These men, so called because they typically defended themselves with rattan shields (*tengpai*), were former followers of Zheng Chenggong's who had been trained in Taiwan to fight the Manchus before 1683 and who, after defeating the Russians, were left without proper reward or care. Their disappointment and the grudges they bore the Manchus, according to Zhou, caused them to found the Tiandihui for purposes of revenge or "Fan-Qing fu-Ming." ⁵⁵

Zhou's argument was grounded first of all on a place-name similarity. He believed Russia, a distant country to the west of China that Chinese officials often referred to as "Xi Luo" or "Western Luo," was the mysterious Xi Lu homeland mentioned in the legend. It was simply that what had originally been "Luo" was transformed into "Lu" because of a similarity of sound.

Zhou was struck also by a parallel between the rattan-soldiers and the Shaolin priests. In his opinion, the rattan-soldiers' role in helping the Kangxi Emperor defeat the Russians and their subsequent demobilization without reward by the Qing court were remarkably similar to the priests' role in helping the emperor defeat the Xi Lu barbarians only to experience the burning of their temple later on. One had only to put the events of the legend side by side with those of the Yakesa campaign, Zhou felt, to see that the Tiandihui must have been created by the rattan-shield soldiers. ⁵⁶

Zhou Yibai believed that the Xi Lu Legend reflected three stages in the Tiandihui's organizational development: its founding by the rattan-shield soldiers of Fujian; its reorganization by Zhu Yigui, the leader of an early Qing uprising in Taiwan; and its fruition under Lin Shuangwen. He saw the uprising in the legend as a coded reference to the Zhu Yigui uprising, and identified the legendary leader Chen Jinnan as a follower of Zhu's.

Zhou Yibai's hypothesis was taken up and elaborated by two scholars from Taiwan, Wei Juxian and Wu Weishi. In an article (or possibly a book) on the revival of Chinese secret societies, ⁵⁷ Wei Juxian wrote that after Zheng Chenggong's general Lin Xingzhu surrendered to the Qing, his 500 rattan-shield soldiers helped attack the Russians at Yakesa, a service that went totally unrewarded. In the following years, their numbers shrank to 128 men, who became monks at the Fahua monastery in Qi county, Hebei. Later, when they rendered assistance during a second anti-barbarian campaign, they did not follow instructions, so the Qing court ordered them to be poisoned with wine. Eighteen managed to flee, but only five survived and were saved at Hengyang. From there, they went to Taiwan, where they founded the Tiandihui.

Equally attached to the rattan-soldiers theory, Wu Weishi used all the official accounts of the Yakesa campaign that he could find—in Palace Archive documents, plus the *Pingding Luo cha fanglüe* (The pacification of Luo cha), the *Qingshigao* (Draft history of the Qing dynasty), and the *Guangyang zaji* (Guangyang miscellany)—to show how their expedition to Heilongjiang paralleled the expedition of the Shaolin priests. From this, he was persuaded that the legend alluded to neither Zheng Chenggong himself nor his general Chen Yonghua (d. 1680), but rather to the rattan-shield followers of Zheng Chenggong who participated in the Yakesa campaign of 1684. ⁵⁸

This idea was also taken up by Zhang Tan, though not without reservations. Acknowledging the ambiguity of the rattan-shield soldiers' role, Zhang admitted that much as he would like to believe they had created the Tiandihui, the evidence to that effect was by no means unequivocal. Nevertheless, he believed that the Qing emperor had "rewarded" the rattan-shield soldiers for their assistance by slaughtering them, and that this murderous act was at the heart of the story of the five priests or "ancestors." ⁵⁹

The other hypothesis to emerge during the late 1940's, that the Tiandihui was founded by a multi-surname fraternity under the leadership of a monk during the Wanli reign of the Ming dynasty, was suggested by Wang Zhongmin of the Beijing University Library. Wang based this theory on a report that Pan Jishun, an official of the Ming dynasty, had sent to the emperor in 1582. In it, he stated that officials in Jiangsu province had arrested a monk named Wang Yuanhong, and that he had confessed to having founded an organization of ten people of different surnames who acknowledged one another as "elder" and

“younger” brothers. The group was divided into “northern” and “southern” factions. The five members of the northern faction adopted the names Ren (Benevolence), Yi (Loyalty), Li (Courtesy), Zhi (Wisdom), and Xin (Faith) as their *hao* (pseudonyms). The five members of the southern faction took the names Jin (Gold), Mu (Wood), Shui (Water), Huo (Fire), and Tu (Earth). Wang believed that the significance of the name Hong in Hongmen was to commemorate the “hong” in the name of Monk Wang Yuanhong, whose name and life story were so altered in the course of retelling during the Qing that he finally ended up as Zhu Hongzhu, the spiritual leader of the rebellion in the Xi Lu Legend.⁶⁰

Although each author of the late 1940’s discussed individuals or organizations whose activities resembled those recounted in the Xi Lu Legend, there is no evidence that what they were talking about was the Tiandihui, for neither the rattan-shield soldiers nor Monk Wang’s “brothers” ever used that name in reference to themselves.

1950—1965: The Influence of State-Building on Research

The turmoil of the late 1940’s, culminating in the exodus of the Nationalists from the Chinese mainland, gave rise to a climate in which political exigency sharply influenced the direction of Tiandihui research and set scholars on both sides of the Straits on different paths.

Research on Taiwan

From the beginning, as we have seen, members of the Guomindang had openly claimed a close connection between their organization and the Tiandihui. Some had even proposed that an unbroken line of descent could be drawn between them.⁶¹ Others believed that, at the very least, much of the Tiandihui’s history as they understood it had foreshadowed their own endeavors. This linkage was reinforced during the 1950’s, when the society’s “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” legacy provided yet another source of inspiration for the recently uprooted Guomindang. Chiang Kai-shek’s perception of Taiwan as a base from which to reconquer the mainland suddenly made Zheng Chenggong’s experiences nearly 300 years before of great relevance. It also heightened the desire of Nationalist scholars to trace the Tiandihui back to Zheng Chenggong, and hence, to the Kangxi era. As a result, the line of inquiry begun by Tao Chengzhang and his contemporaries was continued by scholars who, in endeavoring to confirm that the Tiandihui had been created by Zheng Chenggong or his affiliates, saw themselves as doing their bit to promote the reconquest of the mainland.

Xiao Yishan said as much in 1957 in a revised version of his article “Tiandihui qiyuankao”:

The present political situation [of Taiwan] compared with that of the early Qing is even more serious, for the mainland has been lost and there are no longer any Southern Ming kingdoms to provide footholds of support as there were for Zheng Chenggong in the early Qing. Therefore, we must raise anew the spirit of sacrifice displayed by Zheng Yanping [Zheng Chenggong] and Chen Yonghua at the time they created the Tiandihui.⁶²

In general, Xiao Yishan seems to have held to his opinions, for he still maintained that, despite some foreshadowings in the Kangxi era, the Tiandihui did not make its appearance as a well-ordered, structured, or “revived” (*fluxing*) society until 1734, the jiajin year of the Yongzheng reign. He also continued to believe that the Xi Lu Legend was made up of story lines deriving from three different historical epochs. In keeping with the patriotic sentiment of the era, however, Xiao did add that the founder Chen Yonghua had used the members of the Zheng family to form an organization for restoring the nation.⁶³

Jiang Junzhang, a professor at the Political University in Taipei, made the point even more forcefully. Zheng Chenggong’s aim in creating the Tiandihui, he averred, was to overthrow Manchu rule on the mainland and to organize people of an anti-Qing disposition for the purpose of attacking the mainland. “This,” wrote Jiang, “is comparable to the current advocacy of sending advance troops to the mainland” and “in politics [to] restore the mainland.”⁶⁴

The sources, however, did not lend much credence to the Zheng Chenggong-as-founder theory, and so the scholars in Taiwan soon began picking up on the suggestion of Wen Xiongfei and Zhou Yibai that the Tiandihui was the work of his followers, specifically, the remnants of a brotherhood whose members took the surname Wan.

The Wan brotherhood was alleged to have been formed during the reign of the last Ming emperor when, as a counter to gentry oppression, the commoners joined forces as one heart or mind, took Wan (meaning “multitude,” or 10,000) as their surname to express their solidarity, and selected Zhang Yao (also Zhang Li)

as their leader. Thereafter, Zhang Yao became known as Wan Li or Wan Da, and the other founders, Guo Yi, Da Zong (whose name is sometimes miswritten as Dao Zong), and Cai Lu, as Wan Yi (or Wan Er), Wan Wu, and Wan Qi, respectively. After Beijing fell to the Manchus in 1644, Zhang Yao recruited an army that ultimately submitted to the authority of Zheng Chenggong. Wan Li, Wan Er, and Wan Qi served under Zheng Chenggong in many campaigns until 1658, when Wan Li died in the battle of Nanjing.⁶⁵

One of the first scholars to link the Wan-as-surname brotherhood to the Tiandihui was Guo Tingyi. In his history of Taiwan, published in the mid-1950's, he proposed that the Tiandihui had been created in the Zhang-Quan region of Fujian during the Kangxi era by Wan Qi (Cai Lu) and Wan Li (Zhang Yao), both of whom were members of the Wan brotherhood.⁶⁶

Xiao Yishan incorporated this theory in his *Qingdai tongshi* (Encyclopedia of Qing history; 1962—63). There he argued that the predecessors of the Tiandihui could be traced to the early Qing, when members of the Zheng family who were serving as the guards of Nanao, together with over ninety others of the same mind, took a blood oath and plotted revenge. Zhang Li (Zhang Yao), Guo Yi, and Cai Lu then formed a brotherhood and adopted the surname Wan (becoming Wan Li, Wan Yi, and Wan Lu, respectively) to express their idea of 10,000 people being of one heart and mind. After Zheng Chenggong's death, Chen Yonghua, following the rules his leader had established, spread the society far and wide. This was the beginning of the Tiandihui.⁶⁷

Jiang Junzhang went further, endeavoring to discern connections between members of the Wan brotherhood and certain figures of the Xi Lu Legend to demonstrate that Zheng Chenggong had created the Tiandihui while he was still alive. Jiang suggested that when Zheng moved to Taiwan, he took along Zhang Li, Guo Yi, and Cai Lu, who had sworn a blood oath, organized a secret body, and changed their names to Wan Da, Wan Er, and Wan Qi, and that he subsequently bestowed the name Tiandihui on this Wan brotherhood. From this, Jiang reasoned that “elder brother” Wan Yunlong was really Zheng Chenggong, and Chen Jinnan Chen Yonghua. Their assumed names were contrived to evade government repression.⁶⁸

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, as we will see, other scholars on Taiwan continued to link the creation of the Tiandihui to the activities of a Wan-as-surname brotherhood.

Research on the Chinese Mainland

In China proper, meanwhile, the stress placed on the history of class struggle brought investigation into the Tiandihui's origins to a virtual halt, and research was carried out from the perspective of “righteous peasant uprisings” (*nongmin qiyi*). The aim was now to understand to what extent Tiandihui “rebels” were proto-revolutionaries, whose actions had anticipated the revolutionary struggles of the Communists by several decades.

For the first time, scholars began to cast aside the mantle of Sun Yat-sen and to question whether the Tiandihui was truly founded on the creed of Ming restorationism. Discussions came to turn on the class composition of the society's members, the nature of its uprisings, and its influence on the Taiping and 1911 revolutions. Their political slant notwithstanding, these were works of solid scholarship and careful documentation that would in time influence the quest for the society's origins as well.

One of the first scholars to move research in this new direction was Guo Yisheng, of the Central Minorities Institute, a student of the Taiping uprising, who wanted to know whether the Tiandihui's influence on the rebels had been positive or negative.⁶⁹ In 1956, he put aside what previous scholars had said about the Tiandihui being a product of Chinese resistance against the Manchus and suggested instead that it was a “revolutionary organization reflecting the needs and demands of the urban bourgeoisie.”⁷⁰ Since the Tiandihui appeared in the regions where China's commodity economy was most developed and its cities the most prosperous, Guo saw the Tiandihui as a product of the social and economic development of South China. According to him, the Tiandihui took shape in the mid-, not early, Qing, was closely related to the development of the urban money economy, the sprouts of capitalism, and the strength of the urban bourgeoisie, and drew its principal membership from the urban lower classes, or those without permanent property, secure incomes, food, or clothes.⁷¹

In the same year, Dai Yi, of the Qing History Institute of People's University, Beijing, similarly dismissed Tiandihui research conducted from the sole perspective of “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” as “manifesting clear unilateralism.”⁷² Such research not only neglected the Tiandihui's own antifeudal struggles, but also overlooked its emergence as a product of the new social forces during the last phase of Chinese feudalism. Like Guo Yisheng, Dai Yi concluded that the Tiandihui was a product of China's urban development, but unlike Guo, he ascribed it to the urban bourgeoisie.⁷³

In 1963, Wang Tianjiang published an article in which he differentiated between the White Lotus (jiaomen) and the Tiandihui (huidang) as the two major systems of Chinese societies, and related the society phenomenon of the late nineteenth century to the growth of semicolonialism and the consequent increase in the number of “floating people” (youmin). Before the 1860’s, Wang argued, the sects (jiao) were stronger than the societies (huidang), but this circumstance changed with the Taiping Rebellion.

According to Wang, the sects on the whole reflected the backward production methods of peasant society, and the societies the needs of a “floating” proletariat population. But the proletariat had not been well served by the societies. Wang charged the Tiandihui and the other huidang with having been parochial institutions limited by the influences of the landlord, gentry, and clan systems. Before the Boxer Rebellion, the societies had used the tactics of peasant struggle to resist feudal oppression, but after 1900, lacking a clear political vision of their own, they had been coopted by the exploiting (landlord) classes for their own ends.⁷⁴

Yet even with the shift in emphasis, the idea that the Tiandihui emerged in the early Qing as a part of the national struggle against the Manchus continued to prevail on the mainland, where the views of Guo Yisheng and Dai Yi came under immediate fire. In 1956, Rong Mengyuan restated the old proposition that the Tiandihui had been created in 1674 by the followers of Zheng Chenggong, and that its most important content was “Fan-Qing fu-Ming.” Rong ascribed the spread of the Tiandihui to Southeast Asia, America, and Australia to the peregrinations of Zheng Chenggong’s descendants who, after his defeat on Taiwan, escaped abroad. Acknowledging the contributions of overseas Chinese to the 1911 Revolution and later events in China, Rong believed that the Tiandihui, though composed primarily of peasants, hired laborers, city drifters, and vagabonds, included members of all social classes.⁷⁵

Another who took issue with Guo Yisheng and Dai Yi was Wei Jianyu, of Shanghai Normal University. Though he believed the Tiandihui was an antifeudal, anti-imperialist organization built primarily around peasants, he held that it was formed in the first instance by southern literati who, after experiencing defeat in their armed struggles against the Qing, took their organizational form to the peasants and altered it accordingly.⁷⁶

The idea of the Tiandihui as a weapon in the struggle between Chinese and Manchus of the Kangxi era had by now gained considerable momentum from Mao Zedong’s speech “On Contradictions” (August 1937). Just as he had analyzed the principal contradictions of semicolonial societies, so certain scholars set out to analyze the principal contradictions of the early Qing. The result was new arguments about the emergence of the Tiandihui as a product of the “national” contradiction or “Man-Han” struggle of that period.

Foremost among this group was Yuan Dingzhong, emeritus professor of the Institute for Qing History, People’s University, Beijing. Yuan maintained that three kinds of contradictions existed under the Qing: the nationalist contradiction arising from the subjugation of the Chinese by the Manchus; the traditional class contradiction between landlords and peasants; and a second kind of national-social contradiction between Manchu and Chinese landlords, which arose from their mutual, and often conflicting, desires for political power. In the Kangxi era, he held, the nationalist contradiction between Chinese and Manchu overrode the other two contradictions in importance, for at that point Chinese and Manchu landlords alike set about “enslaving” the Chinese masses, and this caused the class contradictions of the era to combine with the “Man-Han” national struggle. One result of this development was the Tiandihui, as the Chinese, drawing on the experience of past resistance struggles, adopted the “society” mode to further their anti-Manchu cause.⁷⁷

Although the late 1950’s and early 1960’s saw some movement of Tiandihui studies in new directions, the nascent lines of inquiry, which were neither well established nor well received, continued to be overshadowed by the persistence of the view that the Tiandihui was an organization created by Ming Loyalists in their struggle against the Qing.

1964—1990’s: Exploration of the Archives

Despite the general decline in Tiandihui research during the decade as a whole, the 1960’s witnessed a significant breakthrough in the kind of historical source materials brought to the study of the Tiandihui: official documents and archives, whose accounts cast its origins in very different light. The movement began almost simultaneously in Taiwan and on the mainland.

The pioneer in the use of these sources was Cai Shaoqing (then of Beijing University, now at the University of Nanjing), whose research in the First Historical Archives led him to advance an entirely new hypothesis in 1964: that the Tiandihui was founded in the Zhangzhou region of Fujian in 1761 (QL 26) by Ti Xi of Zhangpu county.⁷⁸ Cai believed that the key to the society’s origins lay in the official documents

relating to the Lin Shuangwen uprising because it was only then that the Tiandihui came to the attention of government officials. In the First Historical Archives, Cai Shaoqing discovered Yan Yan's testimony of July 19, 1788, in which he said, of the founding of the Tiandihui:

As for what year the society began, I really don't know. But I heard from Chen Biao that it was created very long ago, and that there was a person named Zhu and one named Li, who founded it together. The one named Zhu is Zhu Dingyuan. I don't know the full name of the one named Li. Later there was a Ma Jiulong who recruited many monks to practice driving out ghosts and other magic techniques, and they separately transmitted the sect [*chuanjiao*].

In recent years there was also a Monk Wan, whose lay name was Tu Xi. He was also a transmitter of the sect.... This, then, is the origin of the Tiandihui.⁷⁹

The line that caught Cai's attention was the statement about Monk Wan, for it accorded well with Governor Wang Zhiyi's report in the *Huangchao jingshi wenbian* (Collected essays on statecraft from the period of the reigning dynasty) that "the Tiandihui of Fujian province was established in 1761 in Zhangpu county by Monk Ti Xi, who secretly incited his followers to plot rebellion."⁸⁰ Even with the name difference, Cai was persuaded that Wang's account was correct for two reasons. For one thing, after having served as an official in Fujian for more than ten years, Wang's knowledge of the local situation would have been indisputable. For another, the 1761 founding date made sense, allowing as it did a few years of preparation and growth before the Tiandihui's first uprising, in 1767.⁸¹

Cai Shaoqing got some support four years later from a counterpart in Taiwan, Dai Xuanzhi, a student of Xiao Yishan's who later served professorial stints at Taiwan Normal University, Nanyang University, Political University, and Zhuhai College near Macao. Dai was of course unable to study the Yan Yan document in the mainland archives firsthand, but from references in the *Da-Qing lichao shilu* (Veritable records of the successive reigns of the Qing dynasty) and a summary of the testimony in (*Qinding*) *pingding Taiwan jilie* (Pacification of Taiwan),⁸² he too concluded that the Tiandihui was founded by Monk Ti Xi (also known as Monk Hong Er) of Zhangpu county.

In an article entitled "Tiandihui de yuanliu" (Origins of the Tiandihui), Dai Xuanzhi explained why he had become convinced that the Tu Xi of Yan Yan's testimony was the governor's Ti Xi. For him, the missing link was provided by the testimony of another society member, Chen Pi, arrested in November 1788. Chen had stated that the founder of the Tiandihui was a monk named Ti Xi, who was also known as Monk Wan, from Zhangpu county, Fujian.⁸³ Dai was satisfied that Yan Yan had mistaken the character "Tu" for "Ti" in the monk's name, and that the actual founder of the Tiandihui was Monk Wan Ti Xi, who was often called Monk Hong Er (or Hong the Second).⁸⁴

Dai balked at the 1761 founding date, however, because it was not clear to him where Wang Zhiyi got the date, and there was no corroboration of it in any of the sources at his disposal. "Without historical materials to substantiate this earlier date," he wrote, "[1761] cannot be accepted."⁸⁵ In fact, his own sources suggested that the society was founded in 1767, he said, most notably a statement by the Tiandihui member Xu Axie, as reported by Governor Sun Shiyi of Guangdong. Xu had claimed that he had been invited by Lai Abian to join a Tiandihui at Zhangzhou that had begun in 1767. Moreover, said Dai, not only had this same date been given by Chen Pi in his testimony; it was also the one accepted by the Qianlong Emperor on the basis of information from the field.⁸⁶

To Dai, the code phrase "mu-li-dou-shi" also seemed to support the 1767 date. He contended that four words referred to numbers of crucial importance to the society:

The character *mu* (wood) is made up of the characters meaning eight and ten. It stands for the number 18, which refers to the year 1661, the 18th [or last] year of the Shun-chih Emperor. The character *li* (founder) can be made by writing the number six above the number one. It stands for the number 61, meaning the year 1722, which was the 61st year of the K'ang-hsi Emperor, or the last year of the reign of the second Ch'ing emperor. The character *tou* (constellation) similarly looks like the characters ten and three combined, and it stands for the number 13, in reference to the year 1735, the 13th year of the Yung-cheng Emperor, or the last year of the reign of the third Ch'ing emperor. The final character *shih* (earth) symbolizes the number 32, which is the year 1767, the 32nd year of the reign of the fourth Ch'ing emperor; this is the year in which the T'ien-ti-hui was established. Thus the phrase *mu-li-tou-shih* was a secret term of the Society which referred to the founding of the Society in 1767.⁸⁷

Dai also believed the Tiandihui had been founded at the Guanyin pavilion (Guanyinting) in Gaoxi, Fujian,

and that the “Honghua pavilion” referred to in the Preface and Hirayama versions of the Xi Lu Legend was another name for the Guanyin pavilion.⁸⁸

Despite the promise of this archival work, the theories of Cai Shaoqing and Dai Xuanzhi were largely ignored. Before these new lines of inquiry, fragile but exciting, could be systematically pursued, three conditions would have to be met. First, the Cultural Revolution would have to run its course on the mainland. Second, the cataloging of documents in both the Palace Museum Archives, Taipei, and the First Historical Archives, Beijing, would have to be completed, and the documents made accessible to scholars and third, a less intense political atmosphere, allowing for more pluralistic approaches to scholarly research, would have to prevail on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

It was not until the late 1970’s that all this finally came about: the Cultural Revolution ended; archives on both Taiwan and the mainland were opened;⁸⁹ and the People’s Republic abandoned the slogan “class struggle as key” as the guiding principle for scholarly endeavor and so created a more open research environment on the mainland. Furthermore, by then Sun Yat-sen and the 1911 revolutionaries had receded far enough into the past for their legacy to be subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Because the picture of the Tiandihui unearthed in the archives stood in marked contrast to that suggested by the Xi Lu Legend, the scholarly debate now turned on which of the two provided the better approach to the origins question.

In Taiwan, the line of investigation begun by Dai Xuanzhi has been continued by Zhuang Jifa, who, in drawing on the documentary collections of the National Palace Museum, has published widely on various aspects of the Tiandihui. Zhuang has continually modified and developed his ideas about the origin and nature of the Tiandihui over the years. Initially, he viewed the society’s emergence in part as a response to the economic and social impoverishment of large numbers of people in Fujian province but mostly as an outgrowth of Chinese political resistance against the Qing. In 1978, for example, he believed that the Tiandihui was a multi-surname brotherhood created for purposes of “Fan-Qing fu-Ming.” He also believed that it predated the Qianlong era. The fact that Ti Xi died in 1779 (QL 44) at the age of sixty-eight, which meant that he would have been born near the end of the Kangxi reign, plus the testimony of Yan Yan and others to the effect that by the time they joined, the Tiandihui had been created “long ago,” convinced him that it had originated during the Kangxi era.⁹⁰

But Zhuang also showed an early interest in the various societies (huidang) and their interrelationships, an interest that was to become the dominant element in his later research. In an essay written in 1979, his concern was whether the Increase Brothers Society of Taiwan was of the same nature as or different from the Heaven and Earth Society of the mainland (both were pronounced Tiandihui but were written with different characters). Since they seemed more alike than not, he concluded that huidang of this sort were essentially multi-surname brotherhoods that had succeeded in spreading because of the impoverished circumstances of their leaders. But he still believed they were created in the first instance for the purpose of “overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming,” and that they had an unbroken existence from the Kangxi era.⁹¹

By 1980, with further investigation into the economic and social circumstances surrounding the emergence of huidang in Fujian, Zhuang Jifa’s thoughts about Ming restorationism as their original *raison d’être* had changed. He was now convinced that they had instead been sparked by the atmosphere of *xiedou* (collective violence or feuding) that prevailed in the region around Zhangzhou and Quanzhou. At this point, he took the position that the creation of sworn brotherhoods under a common surname was one defense mechanism used by groups of small clans against the oppression of the large ones, that the Tiandihui traced back to this pervasive development, and that these organizations, which were not “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” at the start, turned to that ideology in response to the increasing scale of *xiedou* activity during the Jiaqing reign. According to Zhuang, the situation was particularly acute in Taiwan, where increasing numbers of immigrants from Fujian and Guangdong found themselves involved in same-surname, different-surname, and native-place rivalries. He pointed to the Zhu Yigui and Lin Shuangwen uprisings as examples of local *xiedou* that turned into anti-Qing resistance as the oppression intensified.⁹²

Elaborating on this view in a monograph published in 1981, Zhuang expressed his belief that, in the beginning, the Tiandihui did not exhibit a profound national consciousness, and warned against overemphasizing the political significance of “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” in its rhetoric. By this time, Zhuang had come to believe that “the societies [huidang] of such places as Fujian, Guangdong, and Taiwan were popular movements that turned into anti-Manchu campaigns with political significance only in the Jiaqing era.”⁹³

Zhuang Jifa's evolving ideas were aptly summarized in an article in the *Bulletin of the National Palace Museum*. In it, he claimed that the Tiandihui originated relatively early; that it drew its organizational format from the multi-surname brotherhoods; that its “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” elements owed to the prevalence of armed struggle (*xiedou*), and that its spread was related to the socioeconomic circumstances of Guangdong and Fujian provinces.⁹⁴

At the end of this article, Zhuang set out a proposition that would come to dominate much of his thought in the mid-1980's—the hypothesis of a “broad” Tiandihui and a “narrow” Tiandihui. As he later explained it, by the “broad” Tiandihui he meant the various secret societies that were operating before the Tiandihui as such was organized, including both the unnamed brotherhoods (*jiebai xiongdì*) of the Kangxi era and named organizations of the Yongzheng era like the Iron Whip Society (Tiebianhui), the Iron Ruler Society (Tiechihui), and the Father-Mother societies (Fumuhui). Also in this “broad” category were the Sanhehui (Three Unities Society, or Triads), the Sandianhui (Three Dots Society), and all the other groups generally held to have been relatives or antecedents of the Tiandihui. The “narrow” Tiandihui referred specifically to the main body of the Hong League, which was founded in the Qianlong era and which had actually been called “Tiandihui” by its members.⁹⁵

Zhuang Jifa is now investigating the spread of the Tiandihui throughout South China and the social and economic circumstances that encouraged the process. From his latest works, it is clear that he believes the development of secret societies is closely related to the out-migration of people from Fujian and Guangdong and their creation of multi-surname brotherhoods to minister to their needs.⁹⁶

Over this same period, Zhuang Jifa's counterpart on the mainland, Qin Baoqi, of People's University, was pursuing the research begun by Cai Shaoqing.⁹⁷ In 1982, Qin published three articles in which he flatly denied the traditionalists' claims for the Tiandihui. It was not a political organization founded by Ming Loyalists, he insisted, but a mutual aid society founded by small merchants, peddlers, craftsmen, and vagabonds of the rivers and marshes. In fact, like Cai Shaoqing, he believed the Tiandihui had been created by Ti Xi in 1761 (QL 26) and not by Zheng Chenggong, whose life history was not at all in accord with the legendary account and about whom not even one historical document could be found to support a society link.⁹⁸ In 1984, Qin went a step further, with the bold argument that the Kangxi founding date had been accepted because it had served the 1911 revolutionaries' purposes, and that the Xi Lu Legend they summoned up in evidence was the product of later generations of society members and hence not a valid historical source.⁹⁹

Then, in 1985, Qin made a stunning breakthrough with the discovery of a joint palace memorial (rescripted May 27, 1789; QL 54/5/3) from Fujian-Zhejiang Governor-general Wula'na and Fujian Governor Xu Siceng reporting the arrest, handling, and testimony of Yan Yan's teacher, Chen Biao.¹⁰⁰ This memorial seemed to answer several questions. First of all, Cai Shaoqing's conjectured founding date of 1761 was corroborated by the memorialists, and their statement not only predated the comment of Governor-general Wang Zhiyi, on which Cai Shaoqing had based his opinion, but also happened to be the source of Wang's information. For, in a regular memorial (*tiben*) of April 13, 1799 (also discovered by Qin Baoqi), Wang Zhiyi mentioned that he had read and made use of a memorial written during the fifth month by Wula'na.¹⁰¹

On the basis of this document, then, there was good reason to set aside Dai Xuanzhi's objections to the founding date of 1761, for Wang Zhiyi's statement was no longer “isolated and undocumented.”

The memorial also confirmed the conjectures of Dai Xuanzhi and Cai Shaoqing that the Tiandihui was founded by Ti Xi, and that Tu Xi and Ti Xi were one and the same man. In the words of the governors, their investigations showed the “the founder of the Tiandihui was clearly Ti Xi, whose lay name was Zheng Kai, whose priest name was Ti Xi, and who was also called Tu Xi and Monk Hong Er.”¹⁰² What is more, Chen Biao had provided the linkage between Monk Wan and Monk Hong. As he explained, Monk Hong Er was also Monk Wan “because of the fact that in Zhangpu dialect ‘Wan’ and ‘Hong’ sound the same.” If the memorialists quoted Chen accurately, there was clearly no reason to suppose that the repeated references to Hong and Wan found in nearly every internal Tiandihui document had to do with the first Ming emperor, Hongwu, or with any remnants of the “Wan as surname” brotherhood; they were references to the historical figure Ti Xi.¹⁰³

Finally, as further evidence against the Tiandihui's restorationist roots, the memorial stated that at the time of the society's first uprising, its leaders, Lu Mao and Ti Xi, finding themselves with no vehicle around which to rally their followers, came up with Zhao Liangming, who was portrayed as a scion of the Song and not the Ming dynasty.¹⁰⁴ From all of this, Qin Baoqi was convinced that the emergence of the Tiandihui

was in no way connected to the “national contradiction” between the Chinese and the Manchus. It was only later, during the Jiaqing era, as both the society’s organizational form and its opposition to the Qing solidified, that it turned to the rhetoric of “overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming.”¹⁰⁵

Yet even as Zhuang Jifa and Qin Baoqi blazed new trails in Tiandihui research, the traditionalists were marshaling new evidence for their position. In Taiwan, Weng Tongwen, of Suchou University, dismissing the utility of archives for Tiandihui research out of hand (“The archives of the Qing government are helpless to [sic] the problem of locating the origin of the Tiandihui, [so] we have to resort to other means”¹⁰⁶), continued searching for a “Wan as surname” connection. In his article “The Identity of Wan Yun Lung,” he tried to demonstrate that the historical counterpart of Wan Yunlong, introduced in some versions of the Xi Lu Legend as the abbot of the Changlin monastery, Da Zong, was in fact Wan Wu alias Dao Zong of the Wan-as-surname association. Weng Tongwen based his theory on two sources: the version of the Xi Lu Legend in the Gui County Manuscript, which stated that after the burning of the Shaolin monastery, the person who gave the five surviving priests protection was Wan Yunlong, the abbot of the Changlin monastery, whose courtesy name was Da Zong; and the account of the Wan brotherhood in *Taiwan wenji*, which featured a man named Dao Zong. According to Weng, Da Zong and Dao Zong were the same person.

Another partisan of the Wan-surname theory was Fei Haiji, of the National Editing Office in Taiwan. He held that the Tiandihui was created in 1674 by Wan Wu (Da[o] Zong), the younger brother of the leader of the Wan-as-surname group, Wan Gong (original name Zhang Yao), on whom the Yongli Emperor (of the southern Ming) bestowed the title “Jian’an bo,” or Building-peace Earl.¹⁰⁷

But for scholars on the mainland, it was not so easy to ignore the new evidence. The archival discoveries were so compelling that even the most “traditional” scholars had to account for them. The foremost of these traditionalists were Hu Zhusheng and He Zhiqing, who tried to link Yan Yan’s testimony to certain references in the Xi Lu Legend. Most versions of the legend speak of a rebellion led by Zhu Hongzhu, the son or grandson of the Ming Emperor Chongzhen and his concubine Li Shen, a reference that, as we have seen, caused Ming Loyalist scholars to identify the “Li” and “Zhu” who were said to have founded the Tiandihui with the Ming dynasts.

In 1979, for example, Hu Zhusheng of the Wenzhou (Zhejiang) Museum offered this interpretation of Yan Yan’s statement that “There was a person named Zhu and one named Li who founded it [the Tiandihui]”:

Yan Yan’s testimony says it clearly, “Zhu, Li,” are the trunk (main persons), “Hong” is a branch (or subordinate person); the Father’s family is Heaven, named Zhu after the emperors of the Ming dynasty; the Mother’s family is Earth, named Li, after the Ming Emperor’s concubine; as a result Zhu and Li are the ancestors of the Tiandihui. Ming Taizu’s reign title was “Hongwu,” and as a result, [society members] used “Hong” to stand for the two names Zhu and Li in order to lower the guard of local officials. As a matter of fact, because of this, the three names are really two names, and the two names are really one family.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, in Hu’s view, the fact that Zheng Chenggong was referred to as Zhu Chenggong after he received the imperial surname Zhu from the Southern Ming prince was in complete accord with Yan Yan’s statement that one of the society’s founders was named Zhu. For this reason, he agreed with earlier scholars that “the real founder of the Tiandihui was Zheng Chenggong.”¹⁰⁹ Zheng as founding father was also in complete accord with the Xi Lu Legend, he believed. The uprising recounted in the legend was the insurrection Zheng Chenggong mounted against the Qing; the untimely death of the general Zheng Junda, a figure who appeared in later versions of the legend, symbolized the betrayal of Zheng Zhilong (Zheng Chenggong’s father) by the Qing court; and the Zhu Hongying who died at Sanchahe in the legend was Zheng’s leading general, Gan Hui, who likewise died at Sanchahe.¹¹⁰

To Hu, Yan Yan’s testimony on the events of Ti Xi’s life further argued for Zheng Chenggong as the Tiandihui’s founder. According to him:

The Tiandihui is an organization composed of members who have adopted “Wan” as their surname. When Ti Xi organized his own uprising, he called himself Monk Wan to evoke the memory of Zheng Chenggong’s famous general Wan Li (Zhang Yao).... To unite the masses [i.e., his followers] into one heart or mind, [he had them] take Wan as a surname.¹¹¹

There were some other similarities between the two: both men had the surname Zheng and were,

according to Hu, from the same clan and of the same generation; both were influential in southern Fujian, especially in the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou regions; and the activities of both were sustained across two generations (Zheng's son held out against the Qing, and Ti Xi's son was active in the Tiandihui).

He Zhiqing, of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, also thought Yan Yan's statement about Zhu and Li could be connected to the Ming. His candidate for the legendary Zhu Hongzhu was the grandson of the Ming Emperor Chongzhen and the Western Palace Concubine Li Shen. Like Hu Zhusheng, He Zhiqing believed that Zhu and Li gave rise to one family, the family of the Ming dynasty whose surname was Zhu. This was the family to which Emperor Chongzhen's grandson was both heir and would-be restorer. Thus the legendary Zhu Hongzhu was the real life "Zhu Hongzu" (i.e., Zhu Hong "ancestor").¹¹²

As a modern-day traditionalist wedded to the Ming Loyalist theory, He Zhiqing had to date the Tiandihui back to the seventeenth century. The year he favored was 1674, when Wu Sangui's rebellion of the previous year could have provoked enough anti-Qing feeling to stir the commoners to form sworn brotherhoods (*jiebai xiongdì*) and create the Tiandihui. On this view, the tale of the five Shaolin priests swearing a blood oath on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiajin year would have reflected the actual history of the period.¹¹³

Another mainland scholar, Zhang Xingbo, of the History Department of People's University, used Yan Yan's testimony to argue a very different case. From Yan Yan's statement, "I heard that the Tiandihui was created by persons named 'Li' and 'Zhu.' It was transmitted from Sichuan and has already been in existence for a long time,"¹¹⁴ and from what Zhang identified as the society's three universal practices (the sword and blood-oath initiation rites, the goal of "Fan-Qing fu-Ming," and the commitment to mutual aid), he traced the Tiandihui's origins to the anti-Qing army of Sichuan at the beginning of the dynasty. For Zhang, the alleged similarities were compelling: the army's leaders, General Li Yaozi and Bai Jiaolong, had passed under crossed swords and sworn a blood oath to "overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming" in 1649; and there had existed among the troops both an initiation ceremony that employed knives and a code of brotherhood that called for mutual aid.¹¹⁵

Archival discoveries notwithstanding, the strength and persistence of the traditional view among mainland scholars came through clearly in the papers presented at the First Symposium on Chinese Huidang, held in Shanghai in 1984, and subsequently published under the title *Huidangshi yanjiu* (Research on the history of huidang). Here we find He Zhengqing, Wu Yannan, Luo Baoshan, and Chen Xulu all clinging to the idea that the Tiandihui was created by Ming Loyalists no later than the Shunzhi or Kangxi reigns, and insisting that the Tiandihui could not have been created as late as the Qianlong period.¹¹⁶

Stronger still in its advocacy of the "traditional" view and continued adulation of the work of Sun Yat-sen was Luo Ergang's contribution, a revised version of his essay "*Shuihuzhuan yu Tiandihui*" (*Water Margin and the Tiandihui*). Insisting that Sun's writings on the Tiandihui were of extreme importance, Luo wrote that he continued to believe that the society was created in the Kangxi era, that its purpose was to transmit the idea of resistance to the masses, and that current research could and should be guided by these ideas. From the article, it is clear that he also still regarded the founding creed of the Tiandihui as "Fan-Qing fu-Ming" and believed that it was created by Ming Loyalists.¹¹⁷

From the three days of the dialogue at the Second Symposium on Chinese Huidang held in Shanghai four years later, it was clear that, far from resolving the issue of the Tiandihui's origins once and for all, the discovery of new materials had added fuel to the debate. The keynote address was delivered by Cai Shaoqing who, picking up on Jean Chesneaux's theme, discussed the Tiandihui's bifurcation into urban and rural societies. Before the Opium War, he noted, huidang were predominantly rural groups that were preoccupied above all with economic survival and resorted to such illegal activities as seizing government yamen, smuggling, running opium and gambling dens, and engaging in banditry to solve the "internal" food problem of their members. But with the development of modern cities in the aftermath of the war, urban societies came to the fore. These groups were markedly different from the rural ones. Not only was their scale of organization larger and more systematic, but they adopted a dual political stance that allowed them to ally with the imperialists and ultimately to become their lackeys.

Scholars must take more account of the fact that the societies changed over time, Cai said, and he suggested the following periodization:

1. 1761-95: the creation period of societies, including the Tiandihui, in the Min-Yue border region
2. 1796-1840: the period in which the societies spread throughout China and Southeast Asia and underwent name changes to avoid detection by the Qing government

3 1840-74: the period that saw the high tide of society uprisings and the beginnings of the interpenetration of sectarian and religious groups

4. 1874-94: the period in which, as semicolonialism worsened and capitalism penetrated inward from the coast, the main locus of society effort shifted to the Yangtze delta and the Elder Brothers Society's struggle against foreign influence in the major cities of the south

5 1894-1911: the period in which the bourgeois revolutionary leaders sought to use secret societies to carry out their own political agendas

6. 1912-21: the period in which the revolutionaries' inability to satisfy the secret societies' demands caused a rift in the alliances between them

7. 1921-49: the period in which, under Communist guidance, the societies developed relationships with the proletariat and used their organizational and social strength to achieve victory in the "New People's Democratic Revolution." Conditions in this period varied depending on whether the societies were located in liberated or Guomindang areas, or in cities or villages.

Cai then went on to assert that, with the solution of many of the problems that had given rise to societies in the first place, they had begun to lose their social base.¹¹⁸

But for all the continued arguments over the particulars of the Tiandihui, the 1988 symposium saw a developing consensus among scholars of all persuasions that diversity prevailed in both the creation processes and the aims of the various huihang, and that different societies appeared at different times and were founded by members of the elite, as well as of the lower classes. It was also generally agreed that the huibu (registers) and copybooks (chaoben) being periodically unearthed in South China hold great promise for future Tiandihui research.

One entire session was devoted to these discoveries, with special attention to the huibu of the Yang family (possessed by society member Yang Guangfu) of Longyun county (now Tianlin county), Guangxi, which was discovered in 1985 and dates from the Daoguang era (1821-50).¹¹⁹ The panel leader, Wang Xiyuan from the Middle School of Tianlin county, made the interesting suggestion that because many Tiandihui members were minorities, such documents might be used to study the relationship between ethnic minorities and secret societies.

Inspired by the discovery of these new written materials, scholars of the "mutual aid" persuasion began searching for artifacts to buttress their case. By the late 1980's, the results had persuaded many that, instead of telling mutually exclusive stories about the origin of the Tiandihui, all pieces of evidence—copybooks, registers, archival documents, and artifacts—relate parts of the same story, and that with further study, we will finally obtain a coherent view of the Tiandihui.

The most dramatic product of this search to date is the Guanyin pavilion, or Guanyinting, named in both the huibu and the testimony of society members as the site where Ti Xi transmitted the Tiandihui to his disciples. The pavilion, also referred to in the huibu and legends as the Gaoxi temple, is situated in what is now Gaoxi village, Dongxia township, Yunxiao county, about eight kilometers east of the county seat.¹²⁰

According to a Tiandihui couplet ("Earth fortress, high hill, mountain and stream, one thousand years of prosperity; the door faces the sea, ten thousand years the three rivers flow together"), the temple stood at the edge of the sea. Though it is now so far inland that the water is not visible, it was clearly situated on the coast at one time. The *Yunxiao tingzhi* (Gazetteer of Yunxiao subprefecture), for example, states that the Guanyinting was sheltered by the leaves of a big tree and the sea waves in front of its door.¹²¹ Indeed, it was apparently still alongside the sea until recently, for local residents recall that three tributaries (two tributaries of the Zhang River and one known as the Liangshangang) ran together and entered the sea below the temple, which sat atop a small hill and was surrounded by water.

The discovery of the Guanyinting yielded another important artifact: a gold-gilt statue, alleged to be Ti Xi, posing with three fingers of one hand extended as if to receive a tea cup and three fingers of his other hand placed over his heart. Local residents maintain that the statue dates back a century and a half, and that the inspiration for it came to the carver in a dream.

Another purported statue of Ti Xi, made of camphorwood, was found in the nearby village of Baiquan, in Huotian township. Unfortunately, it is not in pristine shape, its natural wood finish having been painted over in a restoration in 1988 funded by donations by overseas Chinese.

A document used in the transmission of the Tiandihui was also uncovered in Baiquan village. Said by the

residents to be between 100 and 150 years old, it consists of one sheet of badly disintegrated paper. Of the eleven or so characters written on it, only five, including those for “heaven” and “earth,” can still be deciphered.

Finally, as we will see in the next chapter, both internal documents (huibu) and archival sources mention in connection with the Tiandihui places such as Gaoxi, Manure Basket Lake (Fenjihu), Baigoutong, and Xiagangwei, all of which proved to be actual sites in Gaoxi environs.

Though none of this evidence in and of itself would serve to document the founding of the Tiandihui as a mutual-aid society in 1761, both material artifacts and identifiable place names do provide strong corroboration for the archival accounts. At the same time, nothing of the sort has been discovered on either the Chinese mainland or Taiwan to give any creditability at all to the other hypotheses on the origins and nature of the Tiandihui.

The Tiandihui in Myth and Legend

Just as the archives have convincingly dispelled traditional arguments for the founding of the Tiandihui in the Kangxi era and for “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” as its *raison d’être*, so have they also destroyed the credibility of the Xi Lu Legend as an authentic contemporary account of the society’s earliest days. It now appears that the legend emerged sometime during the Jiaqing era, along with “Fan-Qing fu-Ming,” as the product of later generations of Tiandihui members, and that it had a developmental history of its own. Just as the society took on new names as a means of avoiding detection, so the Xi Lu Legend was probably created in part to help evoke an even stronger spirit of resistance to government actions taken against society members and their disturbances.

The Mainland Sources

In addition to the versions of the legend discovered in overseas communities by European civil servants, scholars today have at their disposal seven versions hailing from the Chinese mainland itself. Although none of them can be precisely dated, they have been set in sequence on the basis of their provenance. Ironically, the two earliest accounts were the last discovered, so that it is only in the past decade that scholars have had an opportunity to study them chronologically and try to piece out the legend’s elaboration. With those two early versions in hand, we can now readily see how the account of the Shaolin priests’ expedition against the Xi Lu “barbarians” and the subsequent founding of the Tiandihui developed over a fifty- or sixty-year period.

What becomes immediately clear is that the legend grew progressively richer and more elaborate over the years, evolving from a simple tale into a complex story. At the same time, the documents themselves manifest an increasing precision in their internal dating of the story’s major events. Chronological contradictions in the early versions are gradually resolved in the later ones.¹

The earliest known version of the Xi Lu Legend is contained in the society register (*huibu*) of Yao Dagao of Donglan department, Guangxi, which was forwarded to the emperor in 1811 and then deposited in the Qing dynasty archives; Qin Baoqi discovered the register in the First Historical Archives, Beijing, in 1979.²

A slightly later version appears in a register belonging to the Yang family of Tianlin county, Guangxi, which was discovered in 1985 by Wang Xiyuan of the Tianlin Middle School. From a reference to the year “Daoguang wuzi,” we know that it dates from sometime after 1828, and that chronologically it falls between Yao Dagao’s register and the copybooks published by Luo Ergang. The *huibu* has not yet been published in its entirety, and only summaries of its version of the legend were available at the time of writing.³

Both of the copybooks discovered by Luo Ergang are dated to the same period. The first of these, the Gui County Manuscript, was discovered in Qintang, Gui county, Guangxi, by the Office of Gazetteer Revision, in the early 1930’s. The document is believed to have been produced in the years when the Tiandihui leader Chen Kai controlled the county, which puts it in the Xianfeng era (1851-61).⁴ The other copybook, which is also ascribed to the Xianfeng period, is the Shouxian Manuscript, so called because it was discovered in the Shouxian pavilion of Luo Xianglin’s (alias Luo Han) family in Guangzhou. The version of the legend in this copybook is known as the Xi Lu Xu (Xi Lu Preface).⁵

The two versions discovered by Xiao Yishan in the British Museum, the Narration (Xi Lu Xu Shi) and the Preface (Xi Lu Xu), are believed to date from the Tongzhi period (1862—74); Xiao published both in 1935.⁶ The Narration bears considerable resemblance but is not identical to Schlegel’s account in *Thien Ti Hwui: The Hung League or Heaven and Earth Society* (1866). The Preface resembles the version in J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling, *The Hung Society or the Society of Heaven and Earth*.⁷

The most recent account was obtained by the Japanese revolutionary Hirayama Shū in the course of his

field investigations in China and was published in Japan in 1911 and then in Chinese translation in 1912. (*Zhongguo mimi shehuishi*). The Hirayama Manuscript also bears considerable similarity to the Ward and Stirling version.⁸

The Plot and Internal Inconsistencies of the Seven Versions

In all versions, the plot is much the same. The monks of the Shaolin temple go to the aid of the emperor in quelling an invasion by the Xi Lu “barbarians,” whose exact origin is unknown but who are usually referred to as “Oriats” or “Eleuths” in English translations. After returning to the capital in triumph, the monks refuse all forms of monetary reward or investiture as officials and return to their monastery to continue their practice of Buddhism. But the emperor’s gratitude turns to wrath when the monks are accused, by either one of their own or by treacherous officials from outside, of plotting rebellion, and their monastery is reduced to ashes. Most of the monks are killed in the conflagration but eighteen manage to take flight. Thirteen of them succumb to the hardships of the road, leaving a band of only five (or six in one version) to devote themselves to revenge against the Qing and the subsequent founding of the Tiandihui.

During their travels, the five monks encounter two men: Wan Yunlong, a Buddhist abbot or priest, who becomes the first “elder brother” of the Tiandihui, and Chen Jinnan, a former academician of the Hanlin Academy who had resigned from the government in disgust and turned to the study of Daoism. In some versions of the story, Wan Yunlong plays the predominant role in forming the Tiandihui and leading an uprising against the Qing; in others, this role is assigned to Chen Jinnan. Most accounts report that 107 participants swore an oath on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month and thereupon founded the Tiandihui; that they then organized a rebellion, in which a young child appeared and became its 108th participant and designated leader; and that the rebellion was ruthlessly crushed. The subsequent cremation and burial of Wan Yunlong occupies a major portion of several accounts. In every version of the legend, the monks’ endeavors are encouraged by the sudden appearance of a white incense burner, which floats either to the surface or to the edge of a body of water and is inscribed with the words “Fan-Qing fu-Ming.”

Despite the overall consistency of the plot, idiosyncratic detail abounds. Characters, place-names, dates, and even details of the action differ considerably from version to version. Yet, in analyzing the accounts thematically, we can see both their increasing elaboration over time and the ways in which later authors tried to rectify the inconsistencies of earlier ones.

For example, the date of the Xi Lu invasion in the Yao Dagao and Gui County manuscripts was only generally placed in the Kangxi era. The Shouxian Manuscript says it occurred in 1677 (KX 16); the Narration and the Preface both place it in 1714, the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign (the account in the Narration even adds that the invading general was Peng Longtian); and the Hirayama Manuscript declares that it occurred in the Kangxi era (without specifying the year), but adds the parenthetical remark, “some say it occurred during the Qianlong era.”

The earliest documents are also rather laconic on the details of the invasion. The Gui County Manuscript merely states that the emperor’s Palace Guards were sent out and defeated. The Shouxian Manuscript and the Preface add the detail that the defeated Qing general was Guo Tinghui. The Narration goes still farther, stating that the Xi Lu were able to penetrate as far as the Tongguan Pass, a fortress at the branch of the Yellow River in Shaanxi, whose defending generals were Liu Jing and Huang Zhongquan.

Nearly all versions of the story speak of the emperor issuing notices or proclamations asking for assistance in turning back the invasion and promising rewards of gold and/or investiture as a “Wandai” or “Wanhu” Marquis in return for success. In every version, the victorious monks refuse to accept the proffered rewards. In one case (the Gui County Manuscript), they do receive new robes at their own request, but for the rest, they are content with the kinds of imperial tokens (chops or swords) that were sometimes bestowed in advance of an expedition as symbols of imperial sanction.

The Yao Dagao version speaks of a commander-in-chief’s iron seal (*shuaiyin*), with a two-word inscription that is no longer decipherable. In the Shouxian Manuscript, the seal bestowed on the expedition’s general (*zongbing*) was also made of iron and bore the inscription *ri shan* (“sun, mountain”). Similarly, the cast iron chop received by the Shaolin general in the Preface was carved with the words, *ri shan wei ji* (“Sun and mountain as a sign”). In the Narrative, the emperor bestows a triangular jade seal, inscribed *ri shan*, on the monks. Additionally, in the Shouxian, Hirayama, and Preface versions, all the monks were given a sword at the outset of the expedition.

Central to every version of the story is the Shaolin monastery, and all but one (the Gao County Manuscript) agree that 128 monks responded to the emperor’s call for help. But they diverge on the location of the monastery itself. The Yao Dagao Manuscript places it in Gansu province, while the Shouxian

and Preface versions imply that it is on the Jiulian Mountain in Fuzhou prefecture, Fujian, a mountain that the Preface further places in Pulong county. (In fact, there is no such county in Fujian, and the Jiulian Mountain is located in Guangdong near the Jiangxi border.) The Hirayama Manuscript too reports that the monastery is located on the Jiulian Mountain but does not give a province. The Gui County Manuscript and the Narration do not specify any location at all.

In all but one version, the monks are betrayed by a former employee or by someone who joins forces with a disgruntled monk to seek revenge on the rest. The single exception is the Yao Dagao register, which states that treacherous officials pursued the monks. Also, this version is the only one that makes no mention of the burning of the monastery, an event described in loving detail in later versions, which regale readers with the betrayers' names and the accounts of their actions.

The culprit in the Gui County Manuscript is Ma Erfu, also known as Ya Qi ("Ya Seven") because of his rank as number seven in the Shaolin monks' martial arts hierarchy. After breaking the monastery's most valuable lamp, Ma is expelled from the order, and with no place to go, heads for Beijing. There, in a series of conversations recounted in lavish detail, Ma Erfu's fabricated allegations convince high officials and the emperor that the monks are about to rebel, and he succeeds in persuading the emperor to use the delivery of imperial wine as a pretext to enter the monastery and burn it to the ground. This is the only account that puts a specific date to Shaolin's destruction—the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiyin year (a date that in many of the other versions is when the rebels took their oath of brotherhood). There is also an implication but no explicit statement that this incident occurred in the Kangxi era.

The Narration explicitly puts the temple's destruction not in the jiyin year of the Kangxi era, but in the jiyin year of the Yongzheng (1728), and imputes the treachery to an official, Deng Sheng, who goes to the temple to burn incense and, seeing the monks' imperial seal, covets it for himself. Bent on obtaining it, he memorializes the emperor with allegations of impending treason and secures imperial approval for a plot to raze the monastery.

Similarly, the villain of the Shouxian version, Zhang Lianqiu, is a treacherous official, who, on obtaining the emperor's ear, accuses the Shaolin monks of plotting treason. In this case, the bestowal of an imperial banquet is used as the pretext for entering the monastery.

The story recounted in the Preface is more complex and involves three villains: Zhang Jianqiu,⁹ Chen Hong, and Ma Ninger. The first two are treacherous officials who falsely inform the emperor of the monks' impending treason and engage him in a plot to use the pretext of an imperially sent banquet at the time of the Lantern Festival to destroy the monastery. While en route to the monastery to carry out this plan, Zhang happens on Ma Ninger (who may well be a throwback to the Ma Erfu of the Gui County Manuscript), a cart driver and former water carrier at Shaolin who had been dismissed for breaking an incense burner. He agrees to join Zhang in the destruction of the monastery.

The story in the most recent version, the Hirayama account, is even more complex. It begins in much the same fashion as the Preface, with two officials, Chen Wenyao and Zhang Jinqiu (possibly a corruption of the Preface's Zhang Jianqiu), plotting rebellion. Fearing that the Shaolin monks stand in their way, they turn the emperor against them and he agrees to their plan to burn the monastery. Also as in the Preface, they run into a third villain, Ma Yifu, who joins them in their plot. Ma Yifu's background and function in the story are similar to those of both Ma Erfu and Ma Ninger, except that in this instance what got Ma Yifu expelled from Shaolin was his seduction of the wife and sister of Zheng Junda, a figure who appears in only one other version of the story. Here he is the general who led the Shaolin priests in their expedition against the Xi Lu "barbarians."

One way or another, all accounts agree that the monastery was destroyed, and that only eighteen monks escaped with their lives. (According to the Shouxian version and the Narration, 110 monks perished by fire.) All but one also agree that only five survived to avenge the Qing's actions. There is considerable variance, however, in the path of their flight.

Although in some versions of the story, the monks get as far afield as Hunan or Zhejiang, most of their wandering seems to have taken place around what is today Huizhou, Guangdong, and Yunxiao, Fujian. The terminal point for the fleeing monks in the Yang family copybook is the Gaoxi temple, located at the summit of a high mountain in Gaozhou prefecture (Guangdong). Little is said about the course of their peregrinations.

In the Gui County Manuscript, the five surviving monks flee down the Dragon Tiger Mountain (Longhushan), where they meet five unnamed Tiger Generals and three other men, who lead several hundred Buddhist troops into battle against the Qing. Afterward, the monks continue to the Yueshen

temple. There, it appears, they will be cut off, but thanks to the timely interference of the mountain immortals, who engineer an iron bridge for them, they escape to the Great Sun temple of the Hongzhusi (Vast Pearl monastery) of Huizhou prefecture, Guangdong.

In the Shouxian Manuscript, the fleeing monks arrive at Muyang City and Changsha Bay in Dapu county, Chaozhou prefecture, Guangdong,¹⁰ and from there continue to Shicheng county in Huizhou prefecture, also in Guangdong. Not lingering very long, they keep going until they come to the Dragon Tiger Mountain, where they meet five men surnamed, like the five Tiger Generals in the Preface, Wu, Fang, Zhang, Lin, and Yang.¹¹ (But their given names are not all the same.) Together, the monks and the five Tiger Generals proceed to the Yueshen temple to practice Buddhism. Once again, when their road is blocked, the temple's immortals (high mountain deities), Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai, come to their rescue, this time constructing an iron bridge that enables them to reach the Jade Pearl monastery (Yuzhusi).¹²

In the Narration, the fleeing monks' odyssey takes them on to Yunxiao, Fujian, where thirteen of them die before the band reaches Black Dragon Mound (Wulonggang). At Black Dragon Mound, intercession by the immortals, who once again create a floating bridge, then allows them to proceed to the Gaoxi temple in Shicheng county, Huizhou prefecture, Guangdong.

In the Preface, the last five survivors reach Wangquan and Changsha Bay, flee on to the Gaoxi temple at Black Dragon Mound, where they stay a fortnight, and then proceed to the Xiapuan (Xiapu convent), in the Lingwang temple of Huguang province.¹³

The Hirayama version has the priests making their way to Shawankou via Huangquan village, where they bury thirteen of their fallen comrades, are given shelter by a boatman whose craft is anchored under a bridge, and are ultimately allowed to proceed to Changsha Bay in Huizhou prefecture.

Just as the legends differ in their accounts of people and places, so, too, do they differ in the various spirits, gods, or deities who assist the monks in their flight. In the Gui County Manuscript, it is Buddha himself who descends to earth and enables the eighteen monks to escape the fire that consumes Shaolin. Later in the story, after the monks reach the Yueshen temple, the mountain gods, Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai, come to their aid by changing into an iron bridge.

In the Shouxian Manuscript, alarmed by the plight of the monks, the "Emperor of Heaven" and Buddha send the two old immortals, Zhu Kai and Zhu Guang, to turn some yellow air into a cloud bridge. The two Zhus continued to figure in later versions. In the Hirayama Manuscript, they come to the monks' rescue twice, first by blocking their enemies with a thick fog so the monks can make their way to Shawankou, and then by building a brass-and-iron bridge over which they pass to the Baozhu monastery and the Gaoxi temple in Shicheng county, Guangdong. In two versions, the Narration and the Preface, Zhu Guang becomes Zhu Jiang. In the first, Zhu Jiang and Zhu Kai lay a knife in the river and create a bridge; in the second Zhu Jiang joins Zhu Kai in building a floating bridge and a yellow-and-black road for the monks.¹⁴

There is considerable variation in the sponsor of these efforts. Whereas the Shouxian Manuscript, as noted, has the "Emperor of Heaven" and Buddha sending the two immortals to save the monks, the act is ascribed to the "Daluo shenxian" (a holy spirit created by the authors of the legend) in the Preface, and to the Dazun deity in the Hirayama version. In the Narration, still another rescuer makes an appearance: the Damo Buddha (Bodhidharma, the deified founder of the Chan or Zen sect of Buddhism, an Indian priest who brought sutras to China in A.D. 526 and was said to have stayed at Shaolin). He changes into a yellow-and-black floating cloud to save the initial group of eighteen.

As the legend has it, once the five monks reach safe haven, their next task is to plot revenge, form a brotherhood (presumably the Tiandihui, although that name is used in only one version), and stage an uprising. But the befuddled monks need guidance in the matter, and at this point two leaders appear with consistency in every account: Wan Yunlong and a scion of the Ming dynasty.

Wan Yunlong, it will be recalled, is recognized by traditional scholars as the spiritual or de facto founder of the Tiandihui and identified by many of them, but especially Wen Xiongfei, as the historical figure Zheng Chenggong. As we shall soon see, however, Wan Yunlong's position and the role credited to him in the founding of the Tiandihui vary considerably.

In the register of Yao Dagao, we are introduced to the figure of Wan Tiqi, who is said to be the most senior of six (instead of the usual five) surviving monks, to be known as the "teacher" (*shizun*), and to have the Buddhist name Yunlong. In this account, both the leadership of the rebellion and the founding of the Tiandihui clearly reside with Wan Yunlong, who first recruits 108 people to participate in the uprising and then gathers with them in front of Heaven on the appointed day, the twenty-fifth of the seventh month of

the jiayin year, to swear a blood oath and create the Hong family. On this occasion, each of the participants acknowledges him as “elder brother.”

A similar account appears in the Yang family manuscript, where we are introduced to the “old master” Wan Ti Xi of the Gaoxi temple whose priestly name is Yunlong. After acknowledging him as their “teacher,” the five monks descend from the mountain and recruit 107 people to their cause. Wan then sets the twenty-fifth of the seventh month of the jiayin year for the uprising, a day on which Heaven will open the yellow road and the Golden Lotus.

In the Gui County Manuscript, Wan Yunlong appears as the abbot of the Changlin monastery (no location given) whose *hao* is Ci Guang and whose *zi* is Da Zong. He is acknowledged as “elder brother” by the five monks and helps them stage a rebellion at Gaoxi.

Wan Yunlong receives only passing mention, however, in the Shouxian Manuscript, where he is depicted during the uprising as a model of loyalty and righteousness for the others to follow. In this account most of his traditional functions are taken over by Chen Jinnan (who will be discussed in due course).

Wan Yunlong appears twice in the Narration. The first time is at the Dapu convent (no location given), where, upon hearing the monks’ story, he returns with them to Gaoxi and then joins them in drinking wine, discussing plans for rebellion, and swearing an oath to “overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming.” He reappears just as the monks are setting out to launch their uprising. When they arrive at the Yueshen temple of the White Crane Forest (Baihelin), in Shicheng county, Huizhou, Wan Yunlong just happens to be there burning incense and worshipping. With seemingly no recollection of their past encounter, the monks, awed by Wan’s imposing physique, spill out the details of their plot and ask permission to acknowledge him as their “elder brother.” Wan Yunlong agrees and sets the date for the insurrection.

In both the Preface and the Hirayama version, the monks have already firmed up their plans, sworn their oath of brotherhood under the leadership of Chen Jinnan, and set out for the site of the uprising when they meet Wan Yunlong. In the Preface, he is depicted as a native of Fupo county, Taichang prefecture, Fujian (both are fictive places), who, after having killed a man, had left home (and his three sons) to become a priest. Wan is informed of the rebellion by the monks and acknowledged as their “elder brother.” During the uprising, he bears the title “general” (*shuai*). In the Hirayama version, Wan Yunlong appears as the abbot of the Wanyun temple on Wanyun Mountain, a place to which the priests temporarily retreat in the midst of one of their many battles with the Qing. Here he is said to be a native of Taichang prefecture, Zhejiang, originally named Hu Deqi, who had killed a man in his youth and put on the robes of a priest to escape the law. Wan joins the priests as their “elder brother” and swears a blood oath not to rest until he has overthrown the Qing and restored the Ming.

The other figure who stars in all versions of the Xi Lu Legend, the scion of the Ming dynasty, is a precocious lad of about fifteen or sixteen who miraculously appears to the monks as the spiritual leader of their uprising. In the Yao Dagao register, we are left to assume that this unnamed lad is the son of the Ming Emperor Chongzhen ¹⁵ and his concubine Li Shen (*fei*), whose birth at the Gaoxi temple in Yunnan in 1639 is described at the outset of the legend. After the rebellion, the boy disappears as mysteriously as he had appeared.

Both the Gui County and the Shouxian Manuscript give the boy a name: as the son of the emperor and his concubine, he has assumed the name Zhu Hongying. In the Gui County account, his mother, the Western Palace Concubine, is identified as Li Xinyan, and he is said to have served as the leader (*mengzhu*) of the uprising. Here he starves to death after the defeat, whereas the Zhu Hongying in the Shouxian Manuscript flees to White Mouth Cave (Baikoudong) and cuts his throat.

In later versions of the legend, this young prince makes his appearance as the grandson of the Ming Emperor Chongzhen and his concubine Li Shen (*fei*), rather than their son. He is again unnamed in the Narration, but he goes by the name Zhu Hongzhu in both the Preface and the Hirayama version. In the last account, he is also much fleshed out. It describes how, as the proclamation for rebellion goes out, there suddenly appears a red-lipped, long-armed youth, who introduces himself as the grandson of the Emperor Chongzhen and his concubine Li come to avenge his grandfather against the Qing. After being taken on by the rebels as their “master” or “leader” (*zhu*), Zhu Hongzhu, as in the earlier Yao Dagao version, disappears without a trace when the rebellion is suppressed.

As we saw in the previous chapter, since the 1920’s, scholars have used Zhu Hongying (alias Zhu Hongzhu) and his descent from the last Ming emperor as their primary evidence for a Tiandihui-Ming link but have failed to find a convincing historical identity for him. ¹⁶ Nor is there much prospect of any better in the future, since there is no mention of a concubine named Li Shen in the section on concubines of the

official Ming history.

In the Shouxian and Hirayama manuscripts, the figure of Wan Yunlong is completely overshadowed by another character, Chen Jinnan. In the Shouxian version, after the monks discover the “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” incense burner and are trying to figure out how to proceed, they chance to meet Chen Jinnan, who has taken up the cause of the Ming, and make him their “master” (*xiansheng*). Chen Jinnan then leads them in praying to the various gods of the Buddhist pantheon and casting divining blocks to determine whether they will succeed in their revenge. After the failure of the rebellion (and the death of Wan Yunlong), Chen Jinnan resummons the monks and exhorts them to follow the example of the Peach Garden and form a brotherhood. In this account, then, Chen Jinnan emerges as the person who actually founded the Tiandihui.

In the Hirayama account, Chen Jinnan is held up as a Hanlin scholar who had once met the monks at the Gaoxi and Baozhu temples and who, disapproving of the emperor’s decision to burn the Shaolin monastery, resigns his position, takes up Daoism, and leaves his home in Huguang to go to White Crane Cave (Baihedong) and lead the monks in their revenge. Together, they proceed to the Red Flower pavilion (Honghuating), where they discover the “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” incense burner and plot their uprising. As the active coordinator of the uprising, Chen declares himself “incense master” (*xiangzhu*) and selects the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiyin year as the date on which the brothers will swear their oath at the Red Flower pavilion. Once the insurrection gets under way, he becomes its first generalissimo or commander-in-chief (*yuanshuai*).

Chen Jinnan is simply mentioned in the Gui County Manuscript as the master (*xiansheng*) of the Gaoxi uprising. He receives fuller treatment in the Preface, which has him as a former member of the Hanlin Academy who is serving as a Daoist priest at White Crane Cave (Baihedong). Here, too, as in the Hirayama version, he joins with the monks in swearing a blood oath for revenge on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month and becomes the master (*xiansheng*) of their uprising. (It is in between, as the monks are en route to the site of the rebellion, that they run into Wan Yunlong for the second time and make him an “elder brother” of their enterprise.) Chen Jinnan is not mentioned at all in the Yao Dagao register or the Narration.

For scholars trying to reconstruct the historical founding of the Tiandihui on the basis of the Xi Lu Legend, the date on which the oath of brotherhood was sworn is a point of key importance and, as we have seen, a matter of hot dispute. Part of the problem is that most versions place the act in the jiyin year without specifying a reign (a jiyin year occurred once every sixty years). Consequently, the debate has centered over whether the reference is to the jiyin year of the Kangxi reign (1674) or to the jiyin year of the Yongzheng reign (1734). Equally problematical is relating the date of the monks’ expedition against the Xi Lu to the Tiandihui’s founding date, for though the various versions all agree that the former preceded the latter, the earlier ones just ascribe the invasion vaguely to the Kangxi reign (and thus at least make the 1674 date plausible), whereas the later ones specifically put the invasion in either 1677 or 1714, which is to say, after 1674, the jiyin year of the Kangxi reign.

Close reading also reveals that in nearly every version of the legend, there are at least two ceremonies of “worship” (*bai*) or oath-taking, and in some, it is almost impossible to determine which is supposed to denote the actual founding of the Tiandihui. Most explicit in this department is the Yao Dagao register, where we are told that, upon discovering the incense burner, the monks swear an oath to Heaven; that they then go out recruiting; and that when their ranks are filled, they gather again on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiyin year (implicitly in the Kangxi era) to form a brotherhood, swear a blood oath, and take Hong as their surname.

The account in the Gui County Manuscript is a mass of inconsistencies. First of all, it opens with the statement that the Hong family was formed on the twenty-fifth day of the *third* month of the jiyin year of the Kangxi reign but later says the Shaolin monastery was burned on the twenty-fifth day of the *seventh* month of the jiyin year (a logical impossibility, for the fire had to have preceded the founding of the society). Worse still, this version of the legend records two separate instances of the monks swearing an oath and two separate instances of their acknowledging (*bai*) someone as a leader. The monks take one oath on retrieving the incense burner from the water (an occasion when, lacking incense, they burn grass instead) and another at the base of Wan Yunlong’s tomb, when they use their blood to draw up a document and go off recruiting to form a loyal brotherhood. To confuse things further, they make Wan Yunlong their “elder brother” when they meet him at the Changlin monastery, then later acknowledge Zhu Hongying (Zhu Hongzhu) as the alliance leader (*mengzhu*) of the uprising and Chen Jinnan as the vanguard (*xianfeng*). Exactly which of these four events is supposed to represent the founding of the Hong family and hence the Tiandihui is never made clear.

Vaguest of all is the Shouxian Manuscript, which, with no specific date, merely states that after the failure of the rebellion, Chen Jinnan summoned the monks to follow the example of the Peach Garden in forming a brotherhood.

In the Narration, after the incense burner floats to the surface at Gaoxi, the monks discuss emulating the three men who swore an oath of loyalty in the Peach Garden and then run into Wan Yunlong, who returns with them to the Gaoxi temple, where they swear an oath and cast divining blocks in the form of two flowered bowls. Later, when the monks run into Wan Yunlong again at the Yueshen temple on their way to the rebellion, the monks ask him to become their “elder brother.” The date of this ceremony is specifically given as the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiajin year of the Yongzheng reign.

Similar ceremonies occur in the Preface. In one instance, we are told how the monks, on discovering the incense burner, begin casting divining blocks, again in the form of flowered bowls, and burning grass in place of incense. Then again, on what is implied to be the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiajin year of the Yongzheng reign, the monks, the Five Tiger Generals, and Chen Jinnan take a blood oath and form a society. Shortly thereafter, on meeting Zhu Hongzhu, the company repeats the act, now making Zhu Hongzhu their lord or master (*zhu*), and Chen Jinnan their master (*xiansheng*), and establishing vanguard generals and right and left flanks. Later still, when the group encounters Wan Yunlong en route to battle, they acknowledge him as “elder brother” and make him their general (*shuai*).

Least equivocal of all is the Hirayama account, in which Chen Jinnan, after his encounter with the emperor’s grandson Zhu Hongzhu, declares himself “incense master” (*xiangzhu*) and selects the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the jiajin year as the date for the brothers to swear their oath at the Red Flower pavilion (*Honghuating*). The account goes on to state that various society members still regard this as the birthday of the society and the Hong family.

Yet for all the attention that was given to the Tiandihui as the product of these activities, the name appears only in the Narration, and neither of the two mentions there are in reference to the Tiandihui’s founding. In fact, only the Yang family version explicitly states that a society was formed, and it was called the Vast Lotus Victory Society (*Honglian shenghui*), not Tiandihui.

All but two accounts agree that with the addition of the Ming scion, the company that took the field numbered 108. The two exceptions are the Shouxian Manuscript, which has 118 participants, and the Hirayama version, which gives no number at all. But there is hardly any agreement on the where and when of the uprising, still less on the planning for it. The register of Yao Dagao says only that it was led by Wan Yunlong on the ninth day of the ninth month. Neither the Gui County nor the Shouxian manuscript gives any dates, but the Gui County Manuscript does state that the uprising occurred at Gaoxi and was defeated at Baigoutong. According to the Shouxian Manuscript, the planning took place at the Baozhu temple.

The later versions go into more detail, but the only point on which they all agree is the date of the rebels’ defeat—the ninth day of the ninth month. According to the Narration, the rebellion was planned at Gaoxi, where the oath of brotherhood was sworn; commenced on the twentieth of the eighth month; and took place at Yueshen temple in Shicheng county, Huizhou prefecture, Guangdong. The Preface has the uprising planned at the *Honghuating* (Vast Flower pavilion), commencing on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, and taking place at Wufeng Mountain. The Hirayama account is silent on the site of the battle but agrees with the Narration’s starting and ending date: the fighting began on the twentieth day of the eighth month, and Wan Yunlong was killed on the ninth day of the ninth month.

In all versions except the Shouxian Manuscript, Wan Yunlong’s death and burial are treated with some detail, but again, no two accounts are the same. The Yao Dagao register says the ashes of his cremated body were buried at the foot of a three-story pagoda at the Gaoxi temple, near Manure Basket Lake (*Fenjihu*). The Gui County manuscript states that his ashes were buried at Black Dragon Mound (*Wulonggang*), and that the surviving monks then gathered in front of his stele at Baigoutong to draw up a document with their blood.

The Narration has Wan Yunlong dying beneath Cenjie Rock and being buried in an octagonal mound on the left side of Manure Basket Lake, behind Wufeng Mountain. But according to the Preface (which places the battle, as noted, at Wufeng Mountain), Shican Cliff is where Wan fell from his horse and died, and the octagon-shaped rise in which his cremated remains were buried stood at the foot of Wufeng Mountain, not behind it. Here it is the Twelve Summit Mountain that lies behind the grave, and a pagoda nine stories high stands in front of it. In the still more elaborate telling of the Hirayama version, Wan Yunlong’s cremated remains were wrapped in red silk and buried under Ding Mountain. In front of the grave there was a meandering river and behind it were thirteen peaks. On the right were five trees and on the left a single

tree to serve as landmarks. Wan Yunlong was deified as “Da Zong Shen,” and a three-cornered pagoda was erected in his memory.

In several versions, we also find a character named Su who served as the vanguard (*xianfeng*) of the rebellion. In the Gui County Manuscript, his name is given as Su Hongyuan and he appears first as a loyal official who led an imperial concubine to safety so that she could give birth to the emperor’s son who would ultimately lead the monks’ uprising. In return, the prince changed Su Hongyuan’s name to Tian You, and this is the name under which he reappears as the vanguard of the rebellion.

In both the Preface and the Hirayama account, the Su in question is Su Hongguang, who likewise serves as the vanguard of the rebellion and whose name is later changed to Tian Youhong. In the Hirayama version, however, the name change comes only after his death. This is in connection with a tale that is unique to this version, of how, after several years of travel and proselytizing, the monks reassemble to plan another uprising. The death of Su, the last of the original leaders shortly thereafter, leaves the movement in disarray and causes the sympathetic Damo Buddha to resurrect him as the reincarnated spirit of the former Ming official and eunuch Huang Chengsi, who, after hanging himself as a loyal official at the feet of the last Ming emperor, was unjustly reviled as a rebel and left as a wandering ghost without proper burial until finding reincarnation in the body of Su Hongguang. The reincarnated Su-turned-Tian Youhong becomes the leader of the Sanhe army.

One final subplot, which appears only in the two most recent versions, revolves around the character Zheng Junda. According to the Preface, Zheng Junda is deputed by the emperor to accompany the monks as a supply master on the Xi Lu expedition, is rewarded by being made the general (*zongzhen*) of Fenzhou, Huguang (there is no such place), and is later accused of treachery by the officials Zhang Jianqiu and Chen Hong. Upon receiving an imperial summons from Chen Hong, Zheng Junda commits suicide out of loyalty to the emperor and is buried at Xiagangwei. Later, his widow and family members encounter the monks from Shaolin at Xiagangwei as they are holding a memorial service, and through the use of a magic peachwood sword, save them from destruction by the Qing troops.

In the Hirayama account, Zheng Junda is introduced almost at the outset as an excellent warrior and monk of the Shaolin monastery who recruited a band of 128 monks to quell the Xi Lu. Invested by the emperor as a brigade-general, Zheng Junda led the Shaolin troops on their expedition; he seems to have then stayed on in Beijing or gone elsewhere to continue in that position. At some point, the traitor Ma Yifu was dismissed from Shaolin for having seduced Zheng Junda’s wife and sister. The details of how Ma Yifu, Chen Wen Yao, and Zhang Jin Qiu wreaked their revenge on Zheng Junda are not revealed; we are told only that he was forced to hang himself on orders from Chen Wen Yao. Later in the story, the monks encounter Zheng’s wife, sister, and two sons, and join with them in forming a procession to his tomb. There a battle with the Qing erupts, and a magic “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” sword emerges from his grave. Grasping it, Zheng’s wife, Guo Xiying, succeeds in saving the monks, then sensing her own doom at the hands of the enemy, she bequeaths the sword to her sons and, along with her sister-in-law, jumps into the Sanhe River and drowns.

Although the Xi Lu Legend abounds with inconsistencies, the situation with regard to place-names is downright chaotic. As we now know from the archives, the key site for the founding of the Tiandihui was the Guanyinting at Gaoxi, Zhangzhou prefecture, Fujian. Gaoxi figures in nearly every version of the Xi Lu Legend, but its location and function vary considerably. Curiously, not one of them locates it correctly.

At one spot in the Yao Dagao register, Gaoxi is the place in Yunnan where the Ming scion was born, and in another, it is the place where Wan Yunlong was buried, next to Manure Basket Lake. According to the Yang family register, Wan Yunlong was the master of Gaoxi temple, which stands atop a mountain in Gaozhou prefecture, Guangdong. In the Gui County Manuscript, Gaoxi was the site of the uprising; in the Narration, it is a temple in Shicheng county, Huizhou prefecture, Guangdong, where the oath of brotherhood was sworn, and is near the Yueshan temple, where the uprising itself took place.

Gaoxi is unmentioned in the Shouxian Manuscript, but in the Preface, it is a temple at Black Dragon Mound where the fleeing monks took refuge for two weeks; in the Hirayama account, too, Gaoxi was a place of refuge for the monks, but here it is located in Shicheng county, Guangdong. This is also both the place to which they return with the Five Tiger Generals after Zheng Junda’s wife commits suicide, and they kill their enemy Zhang Jin Qiu, and the place where, after years of wandering, they reassemble to conduct their second uprising.

Another temple in Gaoxi, the Lingwang temple, receives passing mention in the Preface as the site of the Xiapu convent of the Xiushen monastery, but according to the legend, it is located in Huguang. The real

temple, one of two referred to today as the Gaoximiao, was established by Prince Chen Yuanguang, the Tang dynasty general who is said to have pacified the Zhangzhou area of Fujian and founded Zhangzhou with settlers from Gushi county. Because of this, local residents called him the “Founding Father (or Prince) of Zhangpu” (Kai-Zhang shengwang). During the Song dynasty, he was invested as the Lingzhu wang (“King whose spirit is native to Zhongzhou”), hence the temple’s alternate name, Lingwang temple.¹⁷

Xiangangwei, mentioned in the Preface as the death site and burial place of Zheng Junda, is also an actual place in the environs of Gaoxi, though the legend locates it in Huguang. The *Yunxiao tingzhi* (Gazetteer of Yunxiao subprefecture) identifies Xiangang Market (*shichang*) as being situated in the southeastern corner of the Yunxiao county seat. According to Qin Baoqi, although the place was officially called Xiangangjie (Xiangang small market), the local residents referred to it as Xiangangwei.¹⁸

Manure Basket Lake (Fenjihu), which was connected with the burial place of Wan Yunlong in both Yao Dagao’s register and the Preface, is also a real place in the Gaoxi environs. People in Fujian refer to level terrain within mountain depressions as *hu* or “lakes.” Manure Basket Lake is the familiar name given to such a depression in the mountains behind the Gaoxi temple, which is or at least once was shaped like a “honey pot.”¹⁹

Finally, and no less chaotic, are the references to the legend’s lesser characters. The five priests who became the society’s Five Ancestors are identified in both the Preface and the Hirayama Manuscript as Cai Dezhong, Fang Dahong, Ma Chaoxing, Hu Dedi, and Li Shikai (written in the Preface as Li Sekai), but appear in the Shouxian version under the very different names of Wu Zuotian, Fang Huicheng, Zhang Jingzhao, Yang Wenzuo, and Lin Dagang. Meanwhile, the Preface applies those names to the Five Tiger Generals, though Wu Zuotian is there Wu Tianyou, and Lin Dagang is Lin Dajiang. In the Hirayama account, Wu Tianyou, Fang Huicheng, Zhang Jingzhao, Yang Changzuo, and Lin Dajiang are brave soldiers who falsely report the deaths of the five priests to the authorities and so engineer one of their several escapes, and the Tiger Generals are Wu Tiancheng, Hong Taisui, Yao Bida, Li Shidi, and Lin Yongchao. These are names that we also find in the Preface—as horse-sellers who formed the left battalion in the rebellion and then became the society’s “Later Five Ancestors.” These men are in fact named twice, once in the text proper and again in a list at the end. But in the list, Hong Taisui becomes Hong Dasui, and it is only here that we find Li Shidi. He replaces the Li Sekai identified earlier in the Preface as one of the horse-sellers, who by the final list has become one of the five monks.

The Fact and Fiction Behind the Legend

It is clear from a comparative analysis of the various versions of the Xi Lu Legend that it can no longer be regarded as a contemporary or authentic record of the Tiandihui’s formation. Thus, to use this document as the foundation for a historical account of the society’s origin is to do history backwards. This is not to say that the legend should be dismissed out of hand. If one turns the tables, so to speak, that is, begins by learning the Tiandihui’s history as recounted in archival documents, and then moves on to the legend, it is possible to find there glimmerings of real history intertwined with fiction.

We can see, for example, that there is a connection to reality in the figure of Wan Yunlong, who, on the basis of the Yao Dagao and Yang family registers, can now be identified as Monk Wan Ti Xi, the historical founder of the society. From the later versions of the legend, we can also see how this link between Wan Ti Xi and Wan Yunlong, so explicitly stated at the outset, was lost. Unfortunately, those versions were the first to come to the attention of scholars, giving rise to the long series of speculations regarding Wan Ti Xi’s historical identity discussed above. Now, however, we can abandon further attempts to identify him with either Zheng Chenggong or any members of the “Wan as surname” brotherhood.

Archival documents and the testimony of Yan Yan make brief references to a developmental stage of the Tiandihui in Sichuan, where a monk, Ma Jiulong, gathered forty-eight monks to practice expelling ghosts and other kinds of magic techniques. The monks then went their separate ways and at some point probably ran into such sojourners from Fujian as Ti Xi, Zhu Dingyuan, Li Amin, and Tao Yuan, taught them their secrets, and then died off, until only thirteen remained to transmit the teaching in all directions. It is possible that this historical episode was part of the inspiration for the diaspora of the handful of surviving Shaolin priests recounted in the Xi Lu Legend. (For more details see Chapter i.)

Despite the appalling geography manifest in the legend, where places that should have been in Fujian often turn up in Guangdong or even farther afield, it is clear that many of the sites mentioned were actual places in the vicinity of Gaoxi. From this, we can probably assume that the authors of the early legends incorporated familiar place-names into their yarns without knowing exactly where these sites were. (Completely absent from all the versions, though, are sites that can even be remotely identified with

Taiwan, sites that one could fairly expect had the legend commemorated either Zheng Chenggong or the anti-Qing resistance conducted from his island headquarters.)

The legend's glimmerings of real history flash by quickly, however, and what emerges even more strikingly is its potpourri of elements drawn from several dimensions of popular culture, including literature, theater, religion, and perhaps even the local messianic beliefs that prevailed in southeast China.

Luo Ergang is probably correct in pointing to *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi) and *Water Margin* or *Outlaws of the Marsh* (Shuihuzhuan) as likely sources for the notion of a loyal brotherhood whose members were bound by an inviolable oath. In the one, as we have seen, the three heroes, Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, in what has come down as an archetype of loyalty, take an oath to restore the Han dynasty and after sealing their covenant with the sacrifice of a white horse and a black cow, die on the same day. In the other, we are told how the 108 sworn brothers likewise sacrifice a horse and a cow and then further affirm their loyalty by burning incense and imbibing mixtures of wine and blood. Such practices, while harkening back to the blood covenants of ancient China, also presaged those that would come to characterize Tiandihui initiations everywhere.

In much the same way that the *Shuihuzhuan* served as a source of inspiration for the major peasant rebellions of the mid-nineteenth century,²⁰ it may also have served as a source of inspiration for the Tiandihui's ideological platform of rebellion. This appeal was not accidental. "The Chinese masses, in sore need of a rebellion against the oppressive rule of the mandarin state, were to find in *Water Margin* the embodiment of their continually frustrated demands."²¹ It was a point that aspiring leaders did not miss. As Jean Chesneaux notes, would-be rebels were well aware of the tale's symbolic value for arousing a collective spirit of self-sacrifice on behalf of noble causes.²²

Just so, the Tiandihui found the novel a useful mobilizing tool. The society's titles, ideology, and slogans all derived from it, Chesneaux has argued, as did the term for its lodges, *zhongyi tang*.²³ Similarly, the famous injunction "Obey Heaven" (Shun-Tian) was widely adopted as a year title by members of the Tiandihui. Moreover, many of the novel's major themes were taken over, in much abbreviated form, by the authors of the Xi Lu Legend. Both feature free communities of individuals opposed to the abuse of power by imperial governments as their central social symbol. The Tiandihui's brotherhood of monks was modeled on Song Jiang's loyal band of "brigands of the marsh." Of significance here is the aspect of elective brotherhood, the voluntary decision of a group of individuals to constitute themselves as a family. Just as in the novel, "people of different surnames gathered together in one family," so the monks of the legend "gathered and, in front of Heaven, formed a loyal brotherhood, took 'Hong' as their surname, swore a blood oath, and created the 'Hong' family."²⁴

In neither the novel nor the legend were the heroes social psychopaths. Rather, they were men who, initially with no desire to rebel, were pushed to it in the defense of justice.²⁵ In both cases, the rebellion that ensued was a moral one. The characters of *Shuihuzhuan* repaired "to the greenwood" only when a bitter experience convinced them that there was no other way to survive:

The novel is truly radical in its assumption that the society of the outlaws is more authentically Confucian than orthodox society—indeed, that in the sorry circumstances of the time, the mountain lair of the robbers is the *only* place men can behave like Confucian gentlemen.²⁶

Similarly, the Shaolin monks were depicted as loyal servants who assisted the throne in quelling the Xi Lu invasion in the northwest and had recourse to rebellion only after the unjust burning of their monastery. Thus, their cause, too, was a just one.

So morally compelling in the novel was the rebels' cause that some members of the ruling classes came over to their side, including most importantly two of the emperor's generals, Qin Ming and Huyan Zhuo, who defected when they came to share the rebels' opposition to the despotic rule of the emperor.²⁷ In the legend, this role was played by Chen Jinnan, a Hanlin scholar who, according to the Preface, left his post to take up Daoism because there were too many "treacherous" officials in the government and who, according to the Hirayama version, left his position in protest of the emperor's decision to burn the Shaolin temple. Recall, also, that in some versions the monks entrusted the real leadership of the rebellion to Chen Jinnan.

Conceivably, the legend's other major character, Wan Yunlong, was also inspired by a figure in the novel, the soldier-monk Lu Da, a further exemplar of the right of moral rebellion in the face of a despotic government. This rather crude and earthy man had served as a major in the emperor's army, but his "righteous" killing of a butcher who had cheated an old man and his daughter had forced him to flee. In the course of flight, he became an intractable Buddhist monk who spent much of his time wandering the earth

as a refugee skilled in the arts of swordmanship. ²⁸ In both the Preface and the Hirayama account, Wan Yunlong is introduced as a man who had taken flight when he killed someone in his youth, and had put on the robes of a priest and become an abbot. After hearing the tale of the monks, Wan was so moved by their righteousness that he joined their cause.

Both the novel and the legend also have in common similar spacial and intellectual boundaries. Liangshanpo, the bandit lair in the novel, was a border region where from time immemorial political authority had been weak, and rebel movements strong:

This area of marshes and mountains, which is perhaps the real heart of the novel, ... represents a location which is by no means accidental. It is situated not far from the confluence of the Grand Canal with the old (southern) course of the Yellow River; it abuts the foothills of T'ai-shan, whose familiar outline occurs in proverbs quoted by the rebels. These south-western confines of Shantung province are an under-administered region, with little agriculture, bordering on the out regions of the modern provinces of Anhwei, Kiangsu, Hopeh and Honan....

Liang-shan po is indeed the archetypal *pien-ch'ü* [border region] and possesses all their fundamental characteristics: distance from the provincial capitals and nerve centres of repression, a favourable geographic environment (marshes, forests, mountains and sandy regions), and a backward economy which allows resistance to take place in the almost ideal conditions of self-subsistence. ²⁹

The Tiandihui was also a borderland phenomenon, founded, as we now know, in the no-man's land between Guangdong and Fujian provinces. This was the setting depicted by the authors of the Xi Lu Legend who, despite their failure to locate many of the places they described correctly, were nevertheless careful to set them in distant, remote, and often inaccessible regions, so that in one respect, at least, the Gaoxi temple became the Liangshanpo of the southeast.

With regard to intellectual boundaries, the political vision presented in both the novel and the legend was one of rebellion, not revolution. The rebels' holing up in Liangshanpo, in the novel, attested to their inability to attack the social order as it was. ³⁰ As Chesneaux observes,

Shui-hu chuan is not an expression of the power of certain social forces to rise up against the old order and install a new one, radically different from the preceding, in its place. The historical mechanisms to which it is connected proceed from a thoroughly conservative ... dialectic. It is not, then, the objective forerunner of the revolutionary movements of modern China. ³¹

The Xi Lu Legend provided no new political vision either, but merely drew on the time-honored symbols of peasant insurrection to legitimize the monks' quest for revenge. By the nineteenth century, it was a common practice for rebel leaders to legitimize their uprisings through claims of descent from former dynasties. Not a few of them presented themselves as "the only truly loyal servants of the throne" who "were fighting against a disloyal clique of flatterers who dominated and misled the emperor." ³² Such figures also made repeated references to "Heaven."

The authors of the Xi Lu Legend thus simply picked up on the tried and true. The invoking of a scion of the former dynasty to rally around during the time of uprising had long been an integral part of peasant rebellion, as had the tradition of invoking children or youths as the leaders of such movements (a practice that had prompted the government to begin punishing the election of youthful leaders with extra severity in 1774).

The notion that salvation would be achieved through the scions of the Ming may have become intertwined also with the messianism of the South China milieu. Barend J. ter Haar believes that aspects of the Xi Lu Legend may have their source in the "Luminous King" traditions that dated back to the sixth century. It is possible, for example, that such figures as Liu Ji (alias Liu Bowen) and Luo Ping became joined in the Qing with the belief that members of the Li and Zhu (Ming) families would appear as saviors. In that period, several cases centered around that belief came to the attention of the authorities, including the case of the proselytizer Ma Chaozhu, mentioned above, who between 1747 and 1752 preached that a young Ming descendant, Zhu Hongjin, assisted by Li Kaihua, would appear with a large army to conquer China. Other similarities with the messianic tradition can be found in the legend's general references to floods, barbarian invasions, apocalyptic disasters, and salvation at the end of a journey. ³³

In addition to what may have been specifically borrowed from the *Shuihuzhuan*, popular literature, and

Chinese millenarianism, some elements may have found their way into the Xi Lu Legend from the general lexicon of popular religion and culture. The inspiration for the monks' expedition against the Xi Lu, for example, may have come from popular tales about the Shaolin monks' historic role in preserving the throne of the Tang emperor Taizong, an act that had been immortalized in fiction. In this episode, the Qin leader, Wang Shichong, set up a kingdom called Yuanzhou and then proceeded with his army to invade the Tang capital and burn it down. Thereupon, several monks from the real Shaolin temple (located in the Song mountains), under the leadership of Zhi Cao, moved in to protect the capital and defend Tang rule. During this expedition, thirteen monks in particular stood out for their accomplishments. The emperor wanted to reward them with official positions, but only one accepted the title of "generalissimo" (*da jiangjun*). So the emperor rewarded them instead with a plaque upon which the events of the expedition were recorded. This plaque can still be seen today on the temple grounds; the fact that it exists, Qin Baoqi suggests, lends support to the theory that this episode inspired the Xi Lu Legend.³⁴

Likewise, the legend reflects the potpourri of supernatural beliefs and practices, some drawn from Buddhism and Daoism, some popularly created, that were cultivated by rebel leaders. These men tended to emphasize, for example, that social and political events were governed by the will of one or more spirits who made their wishes known through omens that could only be interpreted by specialists—which is to say, by themselves. As one scholar puts it, "Rebel leaders often rationalized their uprisings by referring to portents, rumors, children's songs, and so on, which were commonly faked or planted and then interpreted as showing a supernatural power's support of their uprising."³⁵ They also tended to push the worship of certain spirits and to claim for these a promise of success to convince followers that their mission had been sanctioned by unseen gods. Concern with magic also pervaded this realm: "The Confucian notion of the Heavenly mandate and rebel claims of supernatural patronage both originated from the same source, the ancient folk belief in the potency of the Spirit."³⁶

The notion of the sanction of unseen spirits manifests itself in the Xi Lu Legend in the monks' successful divination attempts, and later, in the eleventh-hour intercession of the immortals Zhu Kai and Zhu Guang, whose abilities to create instant bridges or roads and perform other feats bordering on the miraculous repeatedly spared the lives of the refugee priests.

Magic and/or divine revelation was also a part of the legend, especially with the sudden appearance of the white incense burner that floated to the surface of the water, whose "Fan-Qing fu-Ming" inscription was interpreted by the priests as a signal to proceed with their revenge. Some versions of the story also featured a magic sword that could detect poisoned wine or could kill hosts of the enemy even when wielded by a woman.

Religious bases were covered as well. Although the monks were Buddhists and much of the action occurred in Buddhist temples, the religious preferences of the leaders were carefully balanced, so that Chen Jinnan routinely appeared as a Daoist and Wan Yunlong as a Buddhist. Many of the practices described in the legend, like those that characterized the Tiandihui itself, seem to have been direct derivatives of Daoism as well. For example, among Daoists, the burning of written oaths or documents was seen as a means of directly communicating with the gods; and as we have seen, the incense burner was an important apparatus in all Daoist ceremonies. Recall, also, that the term Tianyun ("Heavenly revolution" or "era"), so often used in conjunction with the dates on Tiandihui documents, was similarly employed in many Daoist documents to signify a new era or kalpa.

Finally, the setting of the legend in the bygone Kangxi or Yongzheng era, which has given rise to so much scholarly discord in the twentieth century, was probably a deliberate attempt to lend the Tiandihui credentials. Like the members of other prominent Chinese families who took pains to establish themselves with long genealogies dating back many centuries, the members of the "Hong" family took pains to endow themselves with the substance of pedigree.

In sum, when one looks closely at the Xi Lu Legend, it is clear that the authors reaped from the fields of history and popular legend alike to fabricate a story that had little to do with the Tiandihui's actual history. But the legend has its fascinations—and uses—for all that. If it can no longer be regarded as an authentic historical source, it nevertheless stands as an artifact of popular culture with valuable insights into the psychology of certain elements of nineteenth-century society.

Conclusion

The origin of the Tiandihui has been a subject of continuing concern for Chinese historians of the twentieth century and a matter on which they have never come close to seeing eye to eye. Some have argued passionately that the society was the product of seventeenth-century politics, others just as passionately that it was a product of eighteenth-century demographics. The debate rages on today.

It is our belief that the Tiandihui was created by Monk Ti Xi in the eighteenth century, and that as a product of popular culture with deep social roots, it grew out of the natural configurations of Chinese society in places where the ecological and economic crises were most acute. From Zhangzhou prefecture, one of the most commercialized regions of China, the Tiandihui spread outward, along the river systems and transportation networks, to the county seats and market towns of the border regions, as the displaced set off in search of new opportunities. Yet the phenomenon of Tiandihui transmission was not confined to the bounds of one marketing hierarchy or river system. It was a process that radiated outward in a series of concentric circles that saw the society take shape first in Fujian and Taiwan, then move into Guangdong, Guangxi, and Jiangxi, and finally become implanted in Yunnan, Hunan, and Guizhou.

To a significant extent, the founders of these Tiandihui units were not natives of the regions but sojourners or migrants, and the societies they formed incorporated the inhabitants of several counties and often several provinces. In regions where kinship among people in settled communities constituted the primary vehicle of social interaction, Chinese who found themselves adrift in alien communities seemingly endeavored, through the rituals of sworn brotherhood, to create pseudo-familial networks as a basis for interacting with others.

Once brotherhood had been sworn, the resulting societies (*hui*) figured readily into the survival strategies of China's lowest classes in ways that combined protection and predation. Indeed, the purpose of the Tiandihui in the first instance was to offer unacquainted people the kind of protection and mutual aid normally afforded by family members. In a context where the vulnerable were eager to learn the "secrets" that would bring immediate "brotherhood," enterprising leaders quickly learned that there were profits to be made in the selling of membership and the licensing of leadership.

At the same time, the panoply of Tiandihui activities was rounded out by predatory attempts to seize the resources of others as the leaders adapted their hui to a variety of local agendas. In Guangdong, with its strong tradition of part-time robbery or piracy as an income-enhancing strategy among people at society's economic margins, the Tiandihui provided a convenient recruiting vehicle. In Guangdong, also, as in Fujian, Taiwan, and other regions where collective violence (*xiedou*) and local feuding prevailed, the Tiandihui became involved in everything from property settlements to disputes over water rights.

Finally, when ameliorative mechanisms fell short, the Tiandihui also served as a vehicle for rebellion. Although repeated uprisings in Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, and Jiangxi were a part of the Tiandihui scene before 1810, Ming restorationism does not appear to have been their driving cause. Unfortunately, when it comes to ascertaining the relationship between that movement and the Tiandihui, we may never know as much as we would like, for the society's deliberate avoidance of written records in the early years has made it impossible to determine precisely when and under what circumstances "overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming" became a part of the Tiandihui lexicon.

This much we do know: for a society whose *raison d'être* was supposedly Ming restorationism, references to even the dynasty itself are surprisingly absent from the rituals that lay at the heart of every Tiandihui unit, and that, for the purposes of this study at least, have served to distinguish the Tiandihui and its affiliates from all other societies. These include initiation ceremonies characterized by an oath of brotherhood sworn before burning incense; the rite of passing beneath crossed knives or swords; the transmission of the secret phrase "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan"; and the coded references to the character Hong.

Archival documents indicate that restorationist ideology made its way into the Tiandihui by around 1800, but the unanswered question is whether its absence from the written record before that is significant or coincidental. At the same time, the origins of many of the society's internal documents, especially the huibu and copybooks, are still unknown, as are the specific uses to which they were put during initiations and at other times by society members.

Yet while there is much that must always elude, not all has been done that can be done. It is our hope that this overview of the origins and spread of the Tiandihui will be followed by other studies of a more specific nature. Contributions of what Japanese scholars have written about the Tiandihui would be a welcome addition to the historiographical essays.

Additional work on how the Tiandihui was assimilated into local communities will provide greater insights into its longevity, as well as the ways in which it was used by members of the host societies. Those engaged in local studies might analyze the names of arrested Tiandihui offenders to determine how surname or lineage connections may have dominated specific Tiandihui organizations.¹

One dimension of state-society interaction that emerges from our study is the long-term survival of the Tiandihui in a hostile environment. For most of the society members encountered here, once the society was officially prohibited in 1792, the tactic of choice was avoidance, and the plethora of societies associated with the Tiandihui today is the direct result of members adopting a new name to escape detection. When pursuit became too intense, members would temporarily stop founding units and go into hiding for extended periods. On rare occasions, however, when they deemed their forces sufficient or the moment right, they stood up and exercised their "right to rebel." Thus, to the extent that the Tiandihui was a part of society, interaction between state and society occurred on more than one level.²

In light of the current emphasis on popular literature, culture, and religion, it is surely worth returning to the society's internal documents, not for the purpose of ascertaining the historical origins of the Tiandihui, but to investigate how these writings emerged from the cultural and religious milieu of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We need to do more in the way of comparative research like Bernard J. ter Haar's³ to determine to what extent the Tiandihui and the religious sects of South China derived from shared or discrete traditions.

Finally, to help account for the Tiandihui's ability to endure from the eighteenth century to the present, we need to look at how it functioned in all periods of history, both inside and outside China. Perhaps we will find that it was the very parochialism of the Tiandihui that most accounts for its longevity. For as a diffuse, locally rooted organization without central headquarters and leadership, the Tiandihui has managed to resist the efforts of generations of government officials the world around to exterminate its social networks.

Appendixes

Appendix A

The Testimony of Key Tiandihui Offenders

Document 1: Testimony of Xu Axie

This extract is from the memorial of the governor-general of Guangdong Sun Shiyi, rescripted on March 24, 1787 (QL 52/2/6). It is taken from *Tiandihui*, 1: 70—71.

I am from Shangrao township of Raoping county [Guangdong]. I am thirty years old and usually peddle brewer's yeast to earn a living. I often bought my yeast from Lai Abian of Xiaoxi in Pinghe county, Fujian, who had a store there.

On November 28, 1786, I took some foreign silver to Xiaoxi to purchase yeast. On the road, while passing through Matang place, I was robbed of my silver by four or five individuals I didn't know. I then went to Lai Abian's house to inform him of what had happened, and he said, "If you join the Tiandihui you can avoid being robbed on the road in the future, and I can also get back the silver that was robbed from you."

I was desperate at the time, so I immediately agreed and, together with Lai Abian and his younger brother, Lai Ali, burned incense and created an association [*baihui*]. Then he returned the silver that had been robbed from me. He told me that if I encountered robbers while on the road, I should hold up the thumb as a signal for the word Heaven, and then the person about to rob me would surely use his little finger to mean "Earth." Such an exchange of signals of mutual recognition would keep him from robbing me. He [Lai Abian] also said that if you run into people from the same society, they will all be seen to have secret signals while smoking or drinking tea.

He also taught me two verses which I don't remember very clearly. I only remember they included "Mu-li-dou-shi zhi Tianxia" and "Shun-Tian xingdao hehetong" [All under Heaven know mu, li, dou, shi (or *Mu-li-dou-shi* will rule all under Heaven) and follow the Way of Heaven and together create harmony]. With regard to *mu-li-dou-shi*, the character *mu* refers to the eighteen years of the Shunzhi reign; the character *li* refers to the sixty-one years of the Kangxi reign; the character *dou* refers to the thirteen years of the Yongzheng reign; and the character *shi* is because the Tiandihui was founded during the thirty-second year of the Qianlong reign [1767]—this is the secret meaning of the character *shi*.

After I returned home, I never went back again, nor did I recruit anyone else to enter the society.

Document 2: First Testimony of Yan Yan

Yan Yan's first statement was made in Fujian and forwarded to the emperor by Imperial Commissioner and Grand Secretary Fukang'an, along with his own observations. The memorial, rescripted on May 19, 1788 (QL 53/4/14), and originally published in the *Qinding pingding Taiwan jilüe, ke ben*, juan 58, appears in *Tiandihui*, 1: 96—100. Fukang'an's closing remarks, giving his own estimate of the situation, are omitted here.

Fukang'an and E Hui together memorialize: the people of Taiwan are cunning and their customs are very fierce; robbing and stealing have become the order of the day; their [habits of] forming societies and swearing oaths are especially evil. All the practices of the Tiandihui originated on the mainland and were secretly transmitted to Taiwan. Also there is a kind of vagabond or traveling strongman who moves around creating disturbances and harassing the people; [these types] are called "arhat's feet" [*luohanjiao*]. They all join the Tiandihui because, with its large number of followers, it gives them more advantage in conducting

robbery. They rob anyone who is not a member of the society. Thus, those who have a little domestic property or engage in the peddling trade have no choice but to obey and enter the society for fear of being robbed. As a consequence, the number of its members has daily increased in both the north and the south military districts of Taiwan. When the officials of the subprefectures and counties try to arrest them, they resist the government forces.

The incident of Lin Shuangwen plotting rebellion also arose from his summoning of society members [*huifei*]; Lin's own entrance into the society was initiated by Yan Yan. During the first month of 1787 [QL 52/ 1], the offender Yang Yong was interrogated. According to what Yang said, he heard from Yan Yan that the society was founded by Monk Hong Erfang of Guangdong, who lived in the Fenghuating (Fenghua temple) of Houxi and a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old named Zhu, whose full name and place of residence, he didn't know.^a

When Sun Shiyi secretly and thoroughly investigated this case, he could find no such person or place. After we came to Taiwan, we successively interrogated the offenders about the origins of the Tiandihui; they knew nothing more than the secret signals of using the three fingers while smoking and drinking and of using the cant "don't forget 'ben' [*Hong*] while speaking" [i.e., the slogan "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan"].

After we arrested Lin Shuangwen, we interrogated him several times, but he refused to say anything. Since he was a major offender to be sent to Beijing under escort, we were not able to use too much torture to interrogate him. Then, since Yan Yan was the first to transmit the society [*chuanhui*] to Taiwan and was, at the same time, a notorious bandithead [*zeimu*], we realized that he must be arrested and interrogated. The order to search for him and apprehend him was immediately given, and the offender has been taken into custody and imprisoned.

We have personally interrogated Yan Yan in a very severe way. He is also called Zhuang Yan and Yan Ruohai. He is from Pinghe county in Zhangzhou [Fujian]. In 1783 [QL 48], he used selling cloth as a pretext to come to Taiwan. In 1784, at Amili village of Xidi, he transmitted the society. On April 4, 1784 [QL 49/3/15], after being informed that the Tiandihui had a large number of members and could make robbery easier, Lin Shuangwen listened to Yan Yan and joined. Then, in September 1786 [QL 51/8], Lin Shuangwen invited Lin Han, Lin Ling, Lin Shuifan, Zhang Si, and He Youzhi to drink wine at Chelunpu and engaged them to spread the "evil" to the various villages and hamlets. The result was resistance to arrest and a case of rebellion.

We believe that because Yan Yan was the first to transmit the society to Taiwan, he had to have detailed knowledge of by whom the Tiandihui was spread and from where. So again we interrogated him carefully. [Here is] Yan Yan's testimony:

I heard that the Tiandihui was created by persons named Li and Zhu. It was transmitted from Sichuan and has been in existence for a long time. Someone called Ma Jiulong gathered forty-eight monks and, with them, practiced driving out ghosts and magic techniques. Then, they went out in separate directions to spread the society. Later, the forty-eight recruits gradually died off until there were only thirteen left to found societies in all places. The one in Guangdong was begun by Monk Wan; his lay name is Tu Xi. Where he is now, I really do not know. Besides him there were Zhao Mingde, Chen Pi, and Chen Biao, three people who came from Huizhou prefecture in Guangdong to a place called Yunxiao in Zhaoan county, Zhangzhou, Fujian, to transmit the society.

There is also one named Zhang, but I do not know his full name. Because he has many scars on his face, he is called "Scarface Dog" [Polian'gou]. He often invited Zhao Mingde to stay at his house, [and they spread the society to] the nearby places of Gaokeng'an (convent), Makeng temple, Dingzaixia, and Shijiweixi.

In 1783, Chen Biao used the practice of medicine as an excuse to go to Pinghe county; only then did I learn about the society and join it. It was Chen Biao who told me about these people, but in fact I never saw them.

I also heard of a Chen Pi who supposedly went to Taiwan to spread the society, but nowadays he has already returned to the mainland.

Yan Yan also testified:

All who transmit the society must set up an incense altar in a lonely, secluded place, line up swords and knives, and order the [newcomers] to pass through them. Then, the society's slogans can be told to them, and they can be received as brothers. But even their fathers, mothers, wives, and children must not be informed about these activities, and no records or registers are to be kept. The one called Zhu who founded the society is named Zhu Dingyuan. A person named Li also helped spread the society, but I really do not know his full name. Those two persons spread the word Hong as a secret code and thus are called Hong Erfang ["the two Hong's"]. The society's flags and books all bear the word Hong written in a secret code as "five dots twenty-one" [based on the character's component parts]. If a person knows these secret codes, then he must be of the same society, and when he has trouble, the other members will come to help him even if he does not know them personally.

Yan Yan was also severely interrogated concerning the use of other secret codes. He confessed that there were such secret codes as "mu-li-dou-shi" and "Li, Zhu, Hong." What he said was for the most part in total accord with what Sun Shiyi had already memorialized.

Document 3: Second Testimony of Yan Yan

This memorial containing Yan Yan's testimony before the Board of Punishment in Beijing on July 19, 1788 (QL 53/6/16) was written by Grand Secretary He Shen. It was discovered in the First Historical Archives by Cai Shaoqing and appears in *Tiandihui*, 1: 110—12.

Together with the Board of Punishment, we Your officials interrogated Yan Yan under torture to obtain a confession and respectfully present it to You. After the confession is approved by Your Majesty, the Emperor, we, in accord with the law, will recommend punishment and prepare a draft. Yan Yan said that the transmitter of the sect [*chuanjiao*], Chen Biao, told him that the society [*hui*] was founded by a person named Zhu, which referred to Zhu Dingyuan, and a person named Li. Chen Biao also told him about Ma Jiulong and Monk Wan, who had also transmitted the teaching [*chuanjiao*], and about Zhao Mingde and Chen Pi, who transmitted the society at the same time as Chen Biao. Although Yan Yan testified that Zhu Dingyuan, the one named Li, and Ma Jiulong were all persons of the past, and that he did not know the actual whereabouts of Monk Wan, Zhao Mingde, Chen Pi, or Chen Biao, he did testify that the ones named Zhu and Li created the society in Sichuan, and that Monk Wan then spread it to Guangdong. Yan Yan also testified that when he crossed to Taiwan in 1783 [QL 48], Chen Biao was still in Zhangzhou, and that Chen Pi also went to Taiwan to spread the society. According to the former investigation of Li Shiyao, Zhao Mingde, from Dapu county in Chaozhou prefecture, and Ma Jiulong, of unknown address, both escaped arrest by government officials because their whereabouts could not be identified. Thus, the Emperor must be asked to order the governors-general in Fujian, Guangdong, and Sichuan to search for and apprehend these persons in order to exterminate the society.

[Enclosed transcript of Yan Yan's interrogation]

YAN YAN (*also known as Yan Ruohai*): I am from Pinghe county, Fujian. I am twenty-seven years old. My father is Yan Guo; my mother is née Xu. Both are already dead. I have no uncles, brothers, or children, only a wife née Huang, who is at home in Zhangzhou. In the past, she suffered from mental illness, and nowadays I do not know her whereabouts. I sold cloth for a living.

In 1782 [QL 47], there was in my village one Chen Biao, who practiced medicine. He was from Guangdong, and he recruited people to join the Tiandihui. I followed him and entered his society. In 1783, I went to Taiwan and established a cloth shop in Zhanghua. Also at that time I induced people to join the Tiandihui. In 1784, at Amili village of Xidi, I ran into Lin Shuangwen with whom I afterward became well acquainted. He said to me that he wanted to join the society [*hui*].

I then repeated to Lin what Chen Biao had told me when he initiated me into the society. I said that all who enter this society must establish an incense altar and under crossed swords swear an oath that if a member encounters trouble, the others of the same sect [*jiao*] will do their best to help him. Since members may be too numerous to know one another personally, when they meet, mutual recognition is ensured by such secret signals as extending three fingers, as well as by saying out loud, "Five dots twenty-one," which

is a secret code for “Hong.” Lin Shuangwen then recruited Lin Pan, Lin Ling, and Lin Shuifan.

When I first met him, I thought he was a kind and generous person. That is why I asked him to join the society. I never expected that he would create an uprising. When Lin attacked and besieged Zhanghua, he came and asked me to become the county magistrate of Zhanghua, but because he was a person who had fomented rebellion, I dared not follow him. However, since he regarded me as one of the same sect, he did not kill me. I then fled to hide at Longjiao in Fengshan county, which was in the southern military district [lu].

Also, since I knew that I had committed a grave crime by transmitting the sect to rebellious offenders, I did not dare go to the authorities to surrender. In the second month of this year, when the soldiers destroyed the bandits of the southern district, I was apprehended by *yimin* [“righteous person”] Ruan He.

As for Chen Biao, he is now probably about sixty-eight or sixty-nine. In 1783, when I went to Taiwan, he was still in Zhangzhou. Afterward, I had no further contact with him by letter and now I don’t know his whereabouts.

As for Lin Shuangwen, he initially entered the society [hui] because of me and later went so far as to gather members of the same society for rebellion. I deserve any penalty and cannot defend my actions.

INTERROGATORS: What is the meaning of the name Tiandihui? By whom was the society transmitted and where did it first arise? Of what benefit is it to enter the society? Why is it that so many people are enticed to join? Also, when society members see one another, they must say “Hong” in the form of a secret code. Why? Were there a Monk Hong Erfang and a person named Zhu who were the transmitters? Since you spread the teaching to Taiwan, you must indeed know its origins. You must tell the truth; otherwise you will be tortured.

YAN YAN: The name Tiandihui comes from the fact that Heaven and Earth are the source of being for mankind. The only meaning is respect for Heaven and Earth. Originally, the reason for people’s willingness to enter the society was that if you had a wedding or funeral, you could get financial help from the other society members; if you came to blows with someone, there were people who would help you. If you encountered robbers, as soon as they heard the secret code of their own society, they would then bother you no further; if you were to transmit the sect [*chuanjiao*] to other people, you would also receive their payments of “gratitude.” Therefore, those who want to enter the society [hui] are many in number.

As for what year the society began, I really don’t know. But I heard from Chen Biao that it was created very long ago, and that there was a person named Zhu and one named Li who founded it together. The one named Zhu is Zhu Dingyuan. I don’t know the full name of the one named Li. Later there was a Ma Jiulong who recruited many monks to practice driving out ghosts and other magic techniques, and they separately transmitted the sect [*chuanjiao*].

In recent years there was also a Monk Wan, whose lay name was Tu Xi. He was also a transmitter of the sect. Chen Biao formerly taught me two sentences: “San xing jie-Wan Li, Tao, Hong; Jiulong sheng-Tian Li, Zhu, Hong.”^b This, then, is the origin of the Tiandihui.

As for the ones named Li and Zhu, I heard that they had created the society in Sichuan. I heard that Monk Wan transmitted the sect [*chuanjiao*] in Guangdong. But when Chen Biao taught me, he did not clearly remember the year and place of the society’s creation and transmission, so I am even more ignorant.

Besides these, Chen Biao told me that there were two others, Zhao Mingde and Chen Pi, who were spreading the sect to various places in Fujian. Later I heard that Chen Pi also went to Taiwan to transmit the sect, but I did not see him. As for the existence of the monk called Hong Erfang in the society [hui], actually there is no such person; it is just a secret code that refers to Li and Zhu, together with Monk Wan.

As to why there are red characters on the two words Erfang [meaning literally, two families], and why the word Hong is used as a secret code, Chen Biao only said that all this was passed down by the two families of Zhu and Li; he really did not tell me the other reasons or provide any other explanations.

I wouldn’t dare to testify falsely about the actual meaning of these secret codes. Even if you put me in the press, and pressed me to death, I still couldn’t tell you.

INTERROGATORS: You followed Chen Biao in entering the society, so you obviously must know in which county of Guangdong he is registered and in which village he resides. The one named Zhu who created the society, you know he is Zhu Dingyuan; Monk Wan, you know his lay name is Tu Xi; but how is it that you do not know where he is from or in what temple he lives? What kind of a person is Ma Jiulong? Where did he transmit the sect with Chen Biao? Where do Zhao Mingde and Chen Pi live, and where are they at the

moment? You certainly must know. Also, since you transmitted the sect to Lin Shuangwen, how could he not trust you? So why did you falsely say that you fled to hide? You've still not testified truthfully.

YAN YAN: I only know that Chen Biao is from Guangdong. I really do not know in what department, county, or village he lives. As for Zhu Dingyuan and Ma Jiulong, according to what Chen Biao said, they are both persons of the distant past. Monk Wan, Zhao Mingde, and Chen Pi were spoken of to me by Chen Biao, but I never saw them. I really don't know where they live or their present whereabouts. Chen Biao is the only one I know, but after I crossed the sea, I had no more news of him and really don't know where he went either.

As for my not helping Lin Shuangwen and not receiving his investiture or appointment to office, you have the other offenders, who have been arrested. I am willing [to affirm the above] in a face-to-face confrontation with them.

Document 4: The Palace Memorial of Wula'na and Xu Siceng

This memorial, rescripted on May 27, 1789 (QL 54/5/3), was discovered in the First Historical Archives by Qin Baoqi in 1985. It appears in *Tiandihui*, 7: 522—27.

The governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang, Wula'na, and the governor of Fujian, Xu Siceng, respectfully submit this memorial on the handling of the society offender [*huifei*] Chen Biao and others. In accord with the crime, they have recommended punishment, drawn up a draft, and present it with all due reverence.

Last year, during the eleventh month, it was reported that the two Tiandihui offenders Chen Biao and Monk Xing Yi were arrested in Pinghe and Zhangpu counties. They were sent to the provincial capital and were severely interrogated by former Governor-general Fukang'an and Governor Xu Siceng. The results of the interrogation were then reported to the Throne. However, since the testimony of both offenders was evasive and not entirely true, they were to be interrogated thoroughly again.

We respectfully received an imperial edict: "The Tiandihui offenders [*fei*] dare to spread their teaching to all places and to confuse and poison people's minds. You must pursue every means in seeing that they are arrested and severely handled so as to exterminate completely root and stem. Now, since Xing Yi has identified his father Ti Xi as Monk Hong Er in his testimony, there is no doubt that Ti Xi is the principal offender in this case of transmitting the teaching [*chuanjiao*]. Transmit this imperial order to Fukang'an: that he should use torture to make Xing Yi confess who, besides Zhao Mingde, his father initiated; that he should search out and arrest all those whose names are mentioned by Xing Yi; and that he should obtain hard evidence on whether the offender Ti Xi is still alive or whether he has died of disease. Fukang'an must not fail to conduct further investigation just because of Xing Yi's testimony concerning the death of his father, lest the principal offender escape. Respect this."

We have learned from the investigation of Chen Biao and Monk Xing Yi already conducted by Fukang'an and Xu Siceng, who separately interrogated them, that Ti Xi did in fact die during the third month of Qianlong 44 [1779], that he was cremated, and that his remains were placed in a clay jar buried at Xianfengyan in Zhangpu county. There is a clay lion atop the vessel to serve as a secret marker for the grave.

We then gave flying orders to Intendant (Daotai) of the Ding-Zhang-Long circuit, to go in person to the site, exhume the urn, and send the remains to the provincial capital, where subsequent investigations revealed Xing Yi's testimony to be absolutely true. On top of the jar there was indeed a half-broken clay lion. We then gave Xing Yi the "drip blood" test,⁵ and there was no difference [between Xing Yi's blood and his father's bones]. Thus, the exhumed really was Ti Xi, who had by then been dead for a long time. Of that there need be no more doubt.

The society members Chen Qu, Li Zhai, Zheng Shi, Fang Huang, and Zhao Mingde's son, Zhao Ling, whose names were mentioned in the testimony of Chen Biao and others, were arrested and sent up for handling. At this time, Fukang'an was transferred to the post of governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, and Wula'na was appointed to replace him as the governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang. In this capacity, Wula'na resumed the investigation with Xu Siceng. He familiarized himself with the case by reading the entire account and is now devoting his full attention to this investigation.

From this investigation, we have discovered that the founder of the Tiandihui was clearly Ti Xi, whose lay name was Zheng Kai, whose priest name was Ti Xi, and who was also called Tu Xi and Monk Hong Er. It

was also he who transmitted the phrase “five dots twenty-one” as a secret code, an absurd expression that dared to conceal a hidden reference to the name Hong. That is why when the society was transmitted to Taiwan, the rebels there [namely, Lin Shuangwen] used the symbol “Hong” and the words “Obey Heaven” [Shun-Tian]. These offenders also used the four words “mu-li-dou-shi” to denote the origin of the society in 1767 [QL 32]. All this is very evil and cannot be compared to ordinary cases of deluding the masses and swindling money.

Although it is now proven that Ti Xi has died of disease, there remain Chen Biao, his personally taught pupil, and Xing Yi, his own son. We must severely interrogate these two principal offenders regarding the origin of the society and to whom it was transmitted so that it can be exterminated trunk and root.

But, when giving testimony, Chen Biao took advantage of his long-term illness and extraordinary craftiness. While Fukang'an was still in Fujian, he applied pressure forcing Chen Biao to come forth. So, in addition to testifying about such previously named society members as Zhang Pi [a mistake in the original document; the name should be Chen Pi], Zhang Polian'gou [Scarface Dog Zhang], Zhang Pu, Xu Yan, and Chen Dong, he testified about He Zhe and more than ten others, all of whom were notorious offenders in the Lu Mao rebellion case.

After looking into the Lu Mao case of 1768 [QL 33], which had involved more than 300 followers, we found that the interrogations of the rebels at that time did not reveal the existence of the Tiandihui. Chen Biao had initially tried to conceal [his connection with this rebellion], he claimed, because Lu Mao had been executed and thus no witness could testify [against him]. Later, after the governor-general and other officials made thorough investigations and employed severe torture, Chen Biao finally confessed that both he and Lu Mao had been Ti Xi's pupils. Ti Xi was one of the plotters of the Lu Mao rebellion, and Chen Biao also participated in it. Only then did we know that Ti Xi and Chen Biao were offenders who had slipped away unapprehended after the rebellion and deserve to be treated most severely.

Chen Biao and other offenders confessed that as early as 1762 [QL 27], Ti Xi spread the society at the Guanyin temple of Gaoxi, and that Lu Mao and the others joined it the following year. Chen Biao was invited by Fang Quan to join. Zhao Mingde's original name was Zhao Song, and in 1763 he acknowledged Chen Biao as his teacher. Chen Biao led him to see Zheng Ti Xi, whereupon Zhao Mingde changed his name and joined the society. In 1767, when Lu Mao conceived the idea of gathering the members of the society to plot rebellion, Chen Biao and He Zhe invited Zhao Mingde to join the gang. Because Lu Mao's rebellion was discovered and suppressed in the initial stage by the officials during the third month of 1768, Chen Biao and some other offenders got wind of [the defeat] and fled. Although Monk Ti Xi was the behind-the-scenes director, no one revealed his name. The rank and file all regarded him as the teacher who had transmitted the teaching to them, and because they had all crossed under the knives and swords and taken an oath, they did not testify [about him]. Besides, since the society used only the formula transmitted by Ti Xi, to simply point to the heart with three fingers, there was no written record to trace the society [to its creator], and no offenders revealed it; hence his escape.

There was also an offender Li Shaomin, alias Amin, who entered the society at the same time. Because the line composed by Ti Xi had the words “Li, Zhu, and Hong,” Li Amin, in 1770 [QL 35], fabricated the name Zhu Zhenxing as an early Ming descendant and gathered followers to plot rebellion. He was then apprehended and executed. Thereafter, Ti Xi, Chen Biao, and the others all fled, not daring to continue transmitting the society. In 1779, Ti Xi contracted a disease. He had a natural son, Zheng Ji, who at age seventeen joined the household of someone named Pan as a son-in-law and had children. [Upon hearing of Ti Xi's illness, Zheng Ji went to the] temple to visit his father, who then transmitted to him the society's formulas and revealed to him the names of his disciples Chen Biao, Chen Pi, Zhang Polian'gou, and Zhang Pu in the hope that Zheng Ji would be able to count on them for a living. Ti Xi then died, and because he left behind some [temple] property, Zheng Ji immediately went to the temple, shaved his head, and changed his name to Monk Xing Yi. He also called himself Monk Xu Pei. He lived by cultivating the fields. There was a man who worked as a laborer at the temple to whom [Zheng Ji] transmitted the society's formulas.

Because Ti Xi had died, with the passage of time, the Tiandihui gradually fell into oblivion. In 1782 [QL 47], however, Chen Biao conceived the idea of reviving it and began spreading it [*chuanhui*] again. At that time, the offender's uncle Chen Qu, Li Zhai, and Yan Yan entered the society; each paid more than one or two yuan of foreign silver or 1,000 wen of copper cash in unequal amounts. Li Zhai, in turn, recruited five others, Hou Mai, Lin Long, Chen Zhuo, Li Tonggu, and Xu Songgu, while Lin Long spread the sect to two members, Deng Chang and Liao Pu. In 1783, Yan Yan went to Taiwan and recruited many followers. The officials there were not good at searching out and arresting offenders, with the result that Lin Shuangwen

gathered the masses for his uprising. All this explains why these offenders were able to transmit the society to various places.

According to our investigation, Ti Xi founded the Tiandihui in 1761 [QL 26] and created the rebellious slogans that were used in the two uprisings of Lu Mao and Li Amin. In view of this fact, it is obvious that the society was created for rebellion, and that it served as a means of gathering followers and deluding the masses. After the two uprisings were suppressed in 1768 and 1770, respectively, the activities of the Tiandihui diminished.

However, just before his death in 1779 [QL 44], Ti Xi transmitted the society to his son, Xing Yi; at the same time, the evil Chen Biao survived and dared to spread the old slogans again. He induced people to join the society by tempting them [with the promise] that if they encountered unexpected trouble, there would be someone to help them. Ignorant people could not help being seduced, and thus there was Yan Yan and the transmission of the society to Taiwan, which, in turn, led to Lin Shuangwen's evil activities. After 1779, the purpose of Lin Shuangwen and his followers was no longer to swindle money, but rather to plot rebellion.

We now fear that the society may have been spread very broadly, and that its members may include more than those who are already known. The offenders apprehended in Fujian in accord with the imperial edicts numbered more than one hundred. Some of them were sent to Beijing, and some to Guangdong; others were handled here, and either received capital punishment or banishment. Now more than twenty [new] offenders have been arrested and brought to trial. This shows that the spread of the society is wide and is entirely owing to these named offenders.

When brought in front of the Board of Punishment, Yan Yan spilled out the two verses "San xing jie-Wan Li, Tao, Hong; Jiulong sheng-Tian Zhu, Li, Hong" that had been transmitted to him by Chen Biao. The two lines conceal the names of persons that we needed to get Chen Biao to identify. Moreover, Chen Biao could not pretend to be ignorant of the connection between Yan Yan's journey to Taiwan and Lin Shuangwen's rebellion. So we again interrogated Chen Biao under torture. As a result, he confessed that he indeed stopped transmitting the sect on account of the abortive rebellions of Lu Mao and Li Amin. After Ti Xi's death, because Chen Biao was then old and poor, he again thought of swindling money. Xing Yi was stupid, so stupid that Ti Xi himself had no regard for him. It was only because Xing Yi came to visit him during his illness that Ti Xi became sympathetic to his poverty and his having no one to lean on, and thus transmitted the poems and three-finger signal to him as a means of deriving benefit [making a living]. Because the three-finger signal was widely transmitted and many villagers used it, it is quite impossible to ascertain the names of those to whom it was transmitted. If a person paid between ten and a hundred *wen*, then he would be given formulas. They [the transmitter and transmittee] saw each other once and then went their separate ways, not daring to keep a register. Chen Biao had transmitted the signal to so many people that he could remember only a few names. We then brought the offenders just arrested in front of him; he really did not know them, nor did they know him.

As for the lines he transmitted to Yan Yan, Chen Biao said that he got them orally from Ti Xi and knew only that "jie-Wan" referred to Monk Wan, who was also Monk Hong Er, because of the fact that in Zhangpu dialect "Wan" and "Hong" sound the same. Of Zhu, Li, and Tao, Chen Biao had only seen Li Shaomin. Regarding Zhu Dingyuan, Tao Yuan, and Monk Ma Jiulong, Ti Xi said only that they were people versed in magic arts in far distant provinces, and [Chen Biao] didn't know whether this was true or false. As for Yan Yan, after he had crossed to Taiwan, [Chen Biao] had had no further correspondence by letter with him, so he couldn't possibly know anything about Lin Shuangwen's rebellion. Since the crime of associating with Lin's rebellion was no worse than that of associating with Lu Mao's uprising, and since he had already testified *about* associating with Lu Mao, why, Chen asked, should he invite [further] severe torture by hiding any association with Lin Shuangwen?

According to Chen Biao, Zhao Mingde did in fact die during the first month of 1779 [QL 44]. His original name was Zhao Song, and under Ti Xi's guidance, he changed his name to Mingde. His *hao* name was Yijun. He was buried at Black Stone Pit [Wushikeng] in Zhangpu county and on his tombstone was inscribed "The grave of Yijun Zhao Gong." Because the name Mingde was associated with Ti Xi, Chen Biao had not previously disclosed "Zhao Song" and the alternative "Yijun." It had indeed been his intention to cover up [the name of] Zhao Mingde. Chen Biao then said that now that Zhao's son Zhao Ling had been taken into custody, he could confront him. We interrogated Zhao Ling, and his testimony agreed with Chen Biao's.

Appendix B

The Seven Chinese Versions of the Xi Lu Legend

Document 1: The Yao Dagao Version

This, the earliest known version of the Xi Lu Legend, comes from a *huibu* (register) found among the possessions of the society member Yao Dagao, of Lanzhou, Guangxi, and sent to the emperor on June 27, 1811 (JQ 16/5/7). It appears in *Tiandihui*, 1: 4.

In the twelfth year of the Chongzhen reign [1639], at the time when Li Zicheng rebelled and after he had seized the country, the Imperial Concubine Li Shen [*fei*] went out of the Western Palace to Fuhua Mountain. After becoming pregnant, she went to the Gaoxi temple of Yunnan, where she gave birth to a little lord [*xiaozhu*] who was blessed by both Heaven and the masses. On the sixth day of the sixth month of the sixteenth year, there was a flood in Kaifeng prefecture, and from the water emerged the tombstone of Liu Bowen.^d

During the Kangxi period, when the Xi Lu barbarians rebelled, the Kangxi Emperor put up an announcement stating that anyone able to suppress them would be rewarded with the title Wandai Marquis [“Marquis of Ten Thousand Ages”]. In Gansu province, there was a Shaolin monastery where a brigade-general raised a banner [lit., declared himself vanguard] and received the commander-in-chief’s [*shuaiyin*] seal. The seal was made of iron and weighed two catties and thirteen ounces. On it were inscribed the two characters 關山.^e

The Shaolin monks then received the banner and made an expedition to put down the Xi Lu. They stood face to face against them in battle without using any military personnel, just the 128 monks from the monastery. The Xi Lu barbarians were routed, and countless numbers killed. After the victory, the Shaolin monks returned to the imperial court.

Kangxi bestowed rewards on them but not official posts because they were monks. They returned to the Shaolin monastery to take up their former lifestyle of preaching the law and cultivating themselves in accord with the Way [*dao*].

Later a treacherous official raised troops and pursued them with savage cruelty. Eighteen monks, in flight for four years, finally reached a remote place believed to be at the end of the world.^f

On the sea there floated to the surface a white stone incense burner weighing fifty-two catties. On the bottom were inscribed the four words “Restore the Ming, cut off the Qing” [*xing-Ming jue-Qing*]. They then picked up the white incense burner and in front of Heaven swore an oath.

[By this time, out of the original 128 men] only six teachers and pupils remained; the most senior [*shizun*] was Wan Tiqi, whose Buddhist name was Yunlong. [Because their number was small, they then recruited until there were 107 brothers. There was also a youth who joined the rebellion, which made a total of 108.

On the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the *jiayin* year, the group gathered and, in front of Heaven, formed a loyal brotherhood [*jieyi*], took Hong as their surname, swore a blood oath, and created the Hong family. All of the brothers regarded “teacher” Wan as their “elder brother.”

Yunlong selected the ninth day of the ninth month as the occasion on which to do battle with the Qing and later died in the course of the combat. Soldiers announced his death to the other five brothers, who had been charged with escorting or protecting the little lord [*xiaozhu*]. Upon learning of it, they immediately went to fight the Qing troops, who were defeated and sent fleeing. Afterward, the brothers recovered the body of “elder brother” Wan and, toward the east, cremated it. As the ghost of

“elder brother” Wan ascended to Heaven and departed, the ashes were buried at the foot of the three-story pagoda at the Gaoxi temple by Manure Basket Lake [Fenjihu]. The five brothers returned, but were unable to find the “little lord” or to hear word of his whereabouts, and without a leader, they did not know what to do.

Document 2: The Yang Family Version

The text of this version, given in a copybook found in Tianlin county, Guangxi, in 1985, was unavailable at the time of writing. The following is a summary provided by Qin Baoqi. The two dates in the copybook allow us to place it between the Yao Dagao and Gui County versions. The copybook appears to have been in use during the late 1820’s or the 1830’s.

This account says that the surviving monks from the Shaolin temple fled to Gaozhou prefecture, whose county seat sat on the summit of a mountain. This was where the Gaoxi temple was located. In the temple there was an abbot [*chang/ao*] named Wan Ti Xi, whose priest name was Yunlong. When the five monks saw him, his body was really tall, and his girth very broad. Such was his physique that he could defeat 10,000 soldiers; he was also of upmost loyalty. The five monks then worshipped him as their teacher.... Afterward, the five monks descended from the mountain and from various places recruited brothers until they numbered 107. Wan Yunlong selected the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the *jiayin* year as the date on which Heaven would open the yellow road and the Earth would open the golden lotus (as a symbol for good luck). The brothers then formed the Honglian shenghui (Vast Lotus Victory Society).^f

Document 3: The Gui County Version

This version is from a manuscript discovered by the Office of Gazetteer Revision of Gui county, Guangxi, in the early 1930's. First published by Luo Ergang in his book *Tiandihui wenxianlu*, pp. 1—3, it appears in *Tiandihui*, 1: 33—35. It is attributed to the Xianfeng reign (1851—61).

During the Kangxi reign, on the twenty-fifth day of the third month of the *jiayin* year [1674], when the Hong family was formed [*jiebai*], all of the brothers learned this story:

Because the Xi Lu barbarians rebelled during the Kangxi period, the dynasty deployed several thousand Palace Guards, who were not able to suppress the barbarians and were themselves often defeated. No one dared to resist the barbarians.

Afterward, the emperor put out a notice—no matter whether military personnel, Buddhist monks, female generals, or bandits, whoever tore the notice down and compelled the Xi Lu to submit would receive investiture as a Wanhu Marquis [“10,000 Household Marquis”] and a reward of 10,000 ounces [*liang*] of yellow gold.

A long time passed without anyone daring to tear down the notice. Finally, the monks from the Shaolin monastery heard about it and went to tear it down. When the guards witnessed this, they took the monks to the magistrate of Yutian county, who sent them to Beijing for an interview with the emperor. The emperor [lit., “the dragon countenance”] was very happy. With his golden words, the emperor asked the monks how many additional men and supplies they needed. The monks replied, “We do not require one soldier or weapon; we only want Du Long in charge of supplies and Su Hong as our vanguard [*xianfeng*].”

The emperor then asked on what day they wanted to get started. The monks replied, “Today.” The emperor then took some wine and poured the monks three cups. Laughter and celebration ensued. The monks numbered 108, and each was a hero. Their expedition conquered the Xi Lu, and after the victory, they returned to the imperial court.

The emperor was happy and [ready to invest] them with the title Wanhu Marquis and [give] them the 10,000 ounces of gold, to which the monks replied, “We are monks and have no desire to become officials. Of what use is gold to us? What we did was our duty to the court, and we expect no more reward than some new robes.”

The emperor felt that what they asked was too modest, but when he saw that robes were what the monks really wanted, he gave each of them a robe, which they wore back to their monastery. The monks were grateful for the emperor's favor and returned to Shaolin.

Among the 108 men of the monastery, there was a Ma Erfu who wielded an iron club that weighed thirty-six catties and was seventh [in the temple's martial arts hierarchy]; as a result, he was called Ya Qi or Ya the Seventh. Upon returning to the monastery, he was careless and broke a lamp that was the temple's most valuable Buddhist treasure—a lamp that needed oil only once a year on the fifteenth night of the first lunar month.

When they saw the broken lamp, the other monks were angry and drove him out. Ma Erfu was mad, and so he went straight to the capital [Beijing], where he met the prime ministers of the Left and Right, Chen Wen Yao and Deng Desheng, to whom he wildly cried, “I don't want to betray my country; the Shaolin monks are intending to rebel. During last year's expedition, they plotted with the Xi Lu to act from the inside [while the Xi Lu acted from without]. Because the emperor is so good, I don't want to sit by and say nothing.” The two officials recalled the previous year's expedition and remembered that he [Ma] was one of the members. They also recalled that the emperor had transferred large numbers of Palace Guards and supplies out of the province, but that they had been unable to obtain victory, whereas the monks had

numbered only 108 and had obtained victory without losing a life. So the officials believed that what Ma Erfu said must be true. They waited until the fifth watch [early morning] and took Ma to the emperor.

The foolish emperor did not inquire into whether the report was true or false and failed to bear in mind the monks' former merit. He said, "Does anyone have a good idea of how we might exterminate the Shaolin monastery? If the monks escape, they will then cause trouble."

The two ministers then memorialized: "In the name of the emperor, use the bestowing of imperial wine as a pretext to send also an army of several thousand Palace Guards. Secretly carry along some sulphur to set a fire. At night, after the monks have drunk the wine and are all asleep, then set fire to the monastery to avoid future trouble."

During the first battle, Su Hong and Du Long were removed from office. Because Su Hong had a younger sister who was really beautiful, Ya Qi set himself to pursuing and searching out the two men, who, upon hearing of this, committed suicide and died. They left behind a sword with a peachwood handle, which cut Ya Qi into many pieces.

On the third watch of the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month, the Shaolin monastery was burned. Unfortunately, at that time none of those heroes knew what was happening to them. In alarm, the Buddha [Fozu] descended to the earth [in the form of] immortals and saved eighteen of the monks from the fiery pit. These masters and disciples then fled to the "Extinguish the Qing" [Mie-Qing] village of Xialingwei [not a real place]. They were pursued by Qing troops, and because they had no weapons, another thirteen were killed, which left only five monks, who fled to Dragon Tiger Mountain [Longhushan].

The Five Tiger Generals [the text is unclear, but this appears to refer to the last five monks] met Zhang Jingzhao, Yang Wenzuo, and Lin Dahong, who led several hundred Buddhist soldiers down the mountain to ward off the Qing soldiers. The five monks ran to the Mountain God [Yueshen] temple and looked around. In front was a big river that would hold them back; behind were the pursuing troops. In alarm, the two highmountain deities, Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai, changed into an iron bridge; the five monks then crossed the bridge and fled, whereupon they came to the Great Sun [Taisui] temple of the Hongzhu monastery of the Yunxiao family/lineage of Huizhou prefecture. Finally, there were no more Qing troops in pursuit.

At this time, the monks, with no idea of what to do, intended to jump into the water and commit suicide. The five monks then came to White Sand Bay [Baisha wankou]. Suddenly there floated to the surface of the sea three pieces of old riverstone. On the top of one stone was a white ingot-shaped incense burner, with three feet or legs and two ears, which weighed fifty-two catties, thirteen ounces. On the bottom were inscribed the words *Fan-Qing fu-Ming*, and at the center were the two words *Hong Ying* ["Glorious Hero"]. The five monks retrieved it and at that time swore an oath to Heaven. They pulled up grass to use as incense.

Later on, the five monks ran to the Changlin monastery to stay overnight. Abbot Wan Yunlong (whose *hao* name was Ci Guang and whose *zi* name was Da Zong Gong) asked the five monks what had happened. They told him everything, and afterward they acknowledged Wan Yunlong as their "elder brother." At Gaoxi, they staged a rebellion.

After the Ming emperor Chongzhen lost his throne, the loyal official Su Hongyuan had taken the Western Palace Concubine Li Xinyan out of the province. She bore a son of the emperor's, Zhu Hongying, who changed Su's name to Tian You. At the time of the uprising at the Gaoxi temple [Gaoximiao], an immortal appeared and showed the emperor's son to the masses, who asked who he was and were told that he was the emperor's son [Taizi] Zhu Hongying. Later on, the Five Ancestors [*wuzu*] acknowledged him as their leader [*mengzhu*]; "master" or "teacher" [*xiansheng*] Chen Jinnan as their military strategist [*junshi*]; Su Hongyuan as their vanguard [*xianfeng*]; and the five monks as the Five Tiger Generals.

When the Qing troops heard about all this, they set out to exterminate them. Gaoxi temple's "elder brother" Wan Yunlong then led an army to fight the Qing troops at the foot of Ding Mountain. He lost the battle and was killed. The Five Ancestors fled with the rest to Baigoutong, where they were completely surrounded. The emperor's son starved to death.

Afterward, as the Qing troops withdrew, the Five Ancestors recovered the corpse of Wan Yunlong. They used fire to cremate it and took the ashes to Wulong Mound, placed the body in a suitable position [i.e., so that it lay in the proper geomantic position, facing the northwest]. The tombstone was one foot, nine inches, three *fen*, high, and extended one inch into the ground;⁸ it was inscribed with sixteen words that all together contained forty-eight dots because each word began with the water radical. After the funeral, the Five Ancestors wept in front of "elder brother" Wan Yunlong's tomb at Baigoutong until they were half

dead. They cursed a fatuous and self-indulgent ruler who had harmed the Shaolin monastery and inflicted such misery. Thereupon, they tore off their sodden clothing, bit the skin of their fingers, and, using their garments as paper and their blood as ink, drew up a document, of which each monk was given a piece to take with him. The band then went forth to the various provinces to recruit a loyal brotherhood. Its goal is a secret three-dot [point] revolution to exterminate the Qing, to restore the Ming, and to share happiness, prosperity, and peace with all under Heaven.

Document 4: The “Xi Lu Xu” or Shouxian Version

This version appeared in the Shouxian Manuscript, which was discovered in the pavilion or library of the Hakka family of Luo Han (Luo Xianglin) of Guangzhou, who first published it. It was later reprinted by Luo Ergang, in *Tiandihui wenxianlu*, pp. 41—43, and then in *Tiandihui*, 1: 35—38. It is ascribed to the Xianfeng era (1851—61).

This preface begins with the sixteenth year of the Kangxi reign [1677] at the time the Xi Lu invaded [China], and harassed and killed many of the commoners. The Qing troops were repeatedly defeated in battle and were not able to obtain a victory. The defeated general, Guo Tinghui, returned to the imperial court and notified the emperor of the defeat. Without a stronger army to dispatch, the Kangxi Emperor gathered his officials in the court to discuss ways of defeating the enemy and asked the officials in attendance [*tongshilang*] to show loyalty to the court. But no generals were capable of defeating the barbarians.

The great officials replied with the suggestion that an imperial announcement be put up in all prefectures and counties. Whoever could pacify the Xi Lu, whether they were Buddhist or Daoist priests, Confucians, old or young, men or women, would be invested as a Marquis of 10,000 Households [Wanhu Gonghou].

Kangxi agreed with this and immediately issued an imperial announcement to be hung up throughout every *zhou*, prefecture, and county.

Unexpectedly, the monks of the Shaolin monastery on the Jiulian Mountain of Fuzhou prefecture, Fujian province, heard about the imperial announcement and tore it down. The Palace Guards then escorted the monks into the palace in Beijing and notified the emperor.

The emperor asked, “How will you monks be able to defeat Xi Lu barbarians?”

The monks replied, “We will be able to defeat the Xi Lu without one imperial soldier or weapon.”

Kangxi was very happy and immediately invested the abbot [*changlao*] of Shaolin as the “brigade general” and gave him the seal and sword of the vanguard [*xianfeng*]. The seal was made of iron and weighed one catty, three ounces. On it were carved the two words Ri Shan [“Sun, Mountain”]. The monks received the seal and sword, and immediately unfurled their banners, mounted their horses, and went out to face the enemy.

In less than a month they had subdued the Xi Lu and returned to the court. In only one battle, the brigade general had won back the rivers and mountains. He came to the palace to report to the emperor, and the triumphant martial flag was hung outside the palace.

Kangxi was very happy and planned a victory feast. The emperor picked up the wine flask and passed it to all to drink. He then wanted to invest them [the monks] with official positions. The monks accepted the banquet, but not the official positions, for they intended to return to their monastery and resume their practice of Buddhism.

The Kangxi Emperor then ordered the imperial carriage to escort them ten *li* outside the palace gate [as they set out] on their return. So many people, high and low officials, commoners, and palace maids, poured into the streets to see them off! They [the monks] were accompanied ten *li* to the Chang pavilion, where the emperor in his own hand composed the couplet, “These are the number one heroes; there is no one else to compare to them.” The monks thus returned to Shaolin.

Afterward, there suddenly appeared a treacherous official named Zhang Lianqiu, who was prefectural governor. He came to the court and secretly memorialized Kangxi: “Your official believes that within the country there is not one general able to suppress the Xi Lu, whereas the 128 Shaolin monks, people outside the official order, could obtain victory over the Xi Lu without even using military forces. Moreover, the Shaolin monastery is a place outside the emperor’s control, and the monks are not under imperial rule, nor can they accept official positions. So, if they were to become disloyal, that could be very dangerous for our

Empire.”

The Kangxi Emperor replied, “What is your plan to conquer them?”

Lianqiu memorialized in reply: “According to my plan, the emperor will order an imperial banquet for a certain night. The happy monks will drink. Late in the night, we will use saltpeter to burn down the monastery, and this will prevent trouble from arising later.”

The Kangxi Emperor agreed with the memorial and ordered the Palace Guards to escort the imperial banquet to the Shaolin monastery. Indeed, the monks were really happy and drank until they slept. At midnight, the 3,000 Palace Guards, each carrying gunpowder, set fire to the Shaolin monastery. The monks found it difficult either to advance or retreat, and 110 burned to death, so that only eighteen survived. The eighteen survivors then picked up the vanguard [*xianfeng*] seal and sword and ran to the back hall, where they knelt down to implore the gods of Heaven and Earth, along with the Emperor of Heaven and Buddha, to save them. After their prayer had ended, a road suddenly appeared through the fire, and two old monks named Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai led the eighteen brothers [monks] out, whereupon they fled to Changsha Bay, at Muyang city, in Dapu county, Chaozhou prefecture. The brothers kept going until they reached the Haishan monastery.

When they looked back, they saw the official troops pursuing them from behind, so they kept going until they reached Shicheng (Stone city) county, [missing word; probably Hui]zhou prefecture, and in the process thirteen of the monks were killed. The five surviving monks said, “We are doomed to death, but our hatred and desire for revenge will never be extinguished.”

The five monks continued to be pursued by Qing troops day and night, until they were finally able to escape from the trap.^h

The five brothers, Wu Zuotian, Fang Huicheng, Zhang Jingzhao, Yang Wenzuo, and Lin Dagang, passed over Dragon Tiger Mountain and went all the way to the Yueshen temple to practice Buddhism.

At that time, the five monks had no way to go on; this alarmed the Emperor of Heaven and Buddha, who again sent the two old immortals, Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai, to turn yellow air into a cloud bridge. The brothers crossed over this bridge and came to the Jade Pearl monastery [Yuzhusi], where they wrote the following couplet on the wall: “It is difficult to reach Gaoxi place; by chance we reached the precious pearl.”

At midnight, the brothers woke up and again said with a sigh, “All we have left in us is hatred, and we would rather follow the dead.” They then slept until daybreak. The monks went out to relax; below the veranda, they could see that there was water from three rivers. On the surface of the water was floating a white incense burner made of greenstone, which had two ears and three feet and weighed fifty-two catties, thirteen ounces; on the bottom were inscribed the four words *Fan-Qing fu-Ming*. The brothers immediately fetched it up and placed it in the third field in front of the temple gate.

Later, there was a monk Chen Jinnan, who mentioned the Ming dynasty, and the brothers followed him as their master [*xiansheng*]. They inserted grass or straw as incense, and then they took two pieces of tile to serve as holy tallies or divining blocks to cast and let fall together. The brothers then knelt and prayed to the gods of Heaven and Earth, the sun, moon, and stars, to all the spirits in the sky, and to Guanyin, Buddha [Fozu], and the two old immortals, Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai, to bless their righteous loyalty as they vowed revenge. [They agreed that] if the two tiles fell three times without breaking, they would then have a sign that the Ming dynasty would be restored. The tiles were cast three times, and they did not break. The monks then respectfully requested the two immortals, Zhu Guang and Zhu Kai, to testify to the unbroken tiles as a sign of the restoration of the Ming.

They reached the Baozhu monastery and notified Qian Hong Da Sui. They hung up their righteous banner and summoned [those who were] heroes under Heaven [to their cause]; all together they obtained 118. They then intended to call up these troops to get revenge. The brothers said, “Ancient sages said: learn from the thirty-six heavenly and seventy-two earthly constellations.”

They used their blood to write this poem:

Five individuals separate [with] a poem;
no one else knows of their heroic achievement.
This affair is to be passed down to other brothers;
let them join together through this poem.

As for the emperor's son, Crown Prince Zhu Hongying, he fled to White Mouth Cave [Baikoudong], cut his throat, and died. Master Chen Jinnan disappeared. Later, it was said that he was setting up bases and summoning heroes in Fujian province in compliance with the Five Ancestors' stipulations. They worshipped the Five Ancestors as "Da Gong," and followed the example of the Peach Garden to form a loyal brotherhood. He [Chen Jinnan] was the master [*xiansheng*], who taught his brothers to restore the Ming and secure the country. He has much knowledge about strategy and tactics and many ideas of how to carry this out.

I think that when Elder Brother Wan Yunlong started his uprising, he followed these rules in order to show respect for Chen's kindness and generosity. This set the example for other brothers afterward.

Document 5: The "Xi Lu Xu Shi" or Narration Version

The Xi Lu Narration was discovered in the British Museum by Xiao Yishan. It was first published in his book *Jindai mimi shehui sbiliao*, juan 2: 1b—3b, and then in *Tiandihui*, 1: 39—41. This version is similar but not completely identical to the one in Gustave Schlegel, *Thien Ti Hwui: The Hung League or Heaven and Earth Society*, pp. 7—20. It is believed to date from the late Xianfeng (1851—61) or early Tongzhi (1862—74).

In the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign [1714], the Xi Lu king ordered his great general Peng Longtian to lead his troops to invade China. The local officials were not able to defeat them, so they were able to attack as far as Tongguan [a fortress at the branch of the Yellow River]. The defending generals, Liu Jing and Huang Zhongquan, memorialized the emperor, informing him of the crisis. The court immediately set out to recruit an army and sent out a proclamation, which was posted everywhere. It promised investiture as a marquis and a reward to those who would force the invaders to retreat.

At that time, the Shaolin monastery had 128 monks, who discussed the matter with one another. They tore down the announcement, and without using one soldier or general but themselves, went forward to defeat the enemy. They beheaded General Peng Longtian and killed so many Xi Lu soldiers that their bodies filled the mountain streams and created a river of blood. After the victory, they returned to the court. The Qing emperor was very happy. He granted them the honor of parading in the capital for three days and rewarded them magnanimously. The emperor also intended to reward them with official rank at once.

The monks then memorialized: "We do not want to be officials, but only intend to return to our monastery and resume our practice of Buddhism."

The Qing emperor agreed with the memorial and thus rewarded them with an imperial jade seal carved in the shape of a triangle and inscribed with the two words Ri Shan ["Sun, Mountain"]. It weighed twenty catties, thirteen ounces. The emperor himself personally escorted the monks out of Wumen [Wu Gate, one of the gates of the Forbidden City] and then returned to the Forbidden City.

Thereafter, for many years there was no trouble. But in the thirteenth year of the Yongzheng reign [1728] there was a treacherous old official named Deng Sheng, who went to the monastery to burn incense. He saw the imperially bestowed jade seal in the temple. Realizing that it was really valuable, he coveted it as his own. Because he was out of harmony with the monks [had a grudge against the monks?] he, with an even more evil intent, sent the emperor a memorial saying, "In the Shaolin monastery, the monks are using the teaching of Buddhism to plot rebellion. If they aren't nipped in the bud, then they will give rise to trouble later on. Wouldn't it be good to use an incense-burning as a pretext to set the monastery on fire and burn it down and thus eliminate root and branch?"

That foolish emperor, upon hearing his words, immediately ordered Deng Sheng to lead 3,000 Palace Guards to handle the affair. Indeed, because those in the Shaolin monastery had never been told to set up defenses, no monks were burned to death in one night. This left only eighteen monks, but they were not able to flee. Fortunately, high in the clouds there appeared the Damo Buddha,¹ who knew that five of the monks were not supposed to die because they were predestined to be the founders of the Tiandihui. Then the Buddha [Damo] changed into a yellow and black floating cloud to save the eighteen monks.

By the time they arrived at Yunxiao place, another thirteen monks had died. At this time, the five remaining monks had no idea what to do.

Later, the traitorous official learned that the monks had escaped and ordered the troops to pursue them. The five monks fled to Black Dragon Mound [Wulonggang]. In front and back there was no road, so they could only pray to Heaven, "If we five brothers are not supposed to die, then once again give us a way out."

After their prayer was finished, there came the two immortals Zhu Jiang and Zhu Kai, who laid a knife on the river and turned it into a twoplank floating bridge. The five monks crossed over and escaped to the Gaoxi temple of Shicheng county, Huizhou prefecture, Guangdong province, and settled down there.

Unexpectedly, there floated to the water's surface an object. The five monks picked it up, looked at it, and discovered that it was a white ingot-shaped incense burner. They did not think that it was of much significance, but that night the white ingot-shaped incense burner glimmered in brightness, and they could see that on its bottom were the four words *Fan-Qing fu-Ming*. When the monks saw this bizarre thing, they were very happy. In their loyalty and happiness, they discussed forming [*jiebai*] the Tiandihui in the manner of Liu [Bei], Guan [Yu], and Zhang [Fei], who swore an oath of loyalty in the Peach Garden.

They then went to the Dapu convent [Dapuan], where they ran into Wan Yunlong and told him clearly what had happened. "Elder brother" Wan was very happy. Together with the five monks, he immediately returned to the Gaoxi temple, where they all drank wine and discussed their mutual intention to unfurl a banner of righteousness [i.e., to engage in a just uprising against injustice]. They joined their hearts by swearing an oath. Since this place was a wilderness, without any implements, they used grass as incense. They looked up and saw two branches of a withered tree, which they retrieved to use as candles. They took two bowls with flowers painted on them to use as holy tallies or divining blocks. They prayed to Heaven, with the wish that if the bowls did not break when cast upon the rocks, they would succeed in their enterprise of overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming. After their prayer was completed, they took the bowls and threw them up into the air. As they fell, they didn't break at all, so the monks regarded this as a holy sign. Thinking that they could expect to succeed in avenging themselves, the brothers were all very happy.

They were discussing the matter when they raised their heads and saw a small child of about thirteen years of age. His face was like peach fuzz, his lips like rouge; his two ears extended to his shoulders, and his two hands to his knees. He had all the appearances of royal and noble bearing. He intended to join the army. To this, the monks replied, "You are so young, you don't have any weapons with you, yet you dare come join the army. What special ability do you have?"

The youth replied: "I am no other than the grandson of Emperor Chongzhen, son of the Western Palace Concubine Li Shen [*fei*] and the crown prince. Seeing that the country of my great ancestors was being invaded by the Qing beasts, if I am not able to recover the Central Plain [the country], how will I be able to face my ancestors in the other world? Now I see that all of you heroes are about to raise a righteous uprising, so I came forward to join the army in order to realize my plan of restoration. If you can give me a hand, your help will enable me to recover the Central Plain. One of my aims is to rid myself of my hate, the second is to seek revenge for those who died, and the third is to accomplish the people's wish [for restoration]."

When the monks heard, they agreed with what he said. They then set out for the Yueshen temple of White Crane Forest [Baihelin] of Taipingzhai, Shicheng county, Huizhou prefecture, Guangdong province, to raise the uprising. They gathered troops and supplies, and cut paths through the mountains and built bridges over rivers.

"Elder brother" Wan was just in the midst of burning incense and worshipping at the Yueshen temple when suddenly he heard the sound of men and horses as all gathered in front of the temple.

He then inquired about the details and invited the monks to his room for tea. The monks finished their tea and discussed with one another plans for launching the rebellion. Because they saw that "elder brother" Wan's face was covered with a beard, that his body was big and tall, and that he was a brave and courageous person, the monks said, "We would like to acknowledge you as our 'elder brother.'"

The date was the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the *jiayin* year of the Yongzheng reign. The men swore a blood oath and selected the twentieth day of the eighth month to send out their army to do battle with the Qing. They fought until the ninth day of the ninth month (October 9). "Elder brother" Wan then lost his advantage, was defeated, and killed. He died beneath Cenjie Rock.

One of the soldiers then went forth to inform the five monk brothers, who were in the city drinking wine. When they heard the news, they immediately went out together. The Qing troops were defeated, and the number of dead was too large to count. The monks returned to cremate the corpse of their "elder brother," designated him as an ancestor, and buried him at the back of Five Phoenix [Wufeng] Mountain at the left side of Manure Basket Lake [Fenjihu] in an octagonal earth mound. The mound was three *zhang* high and twenty-one *zhang*, eight *chi*, three *cun* long.¹

The body was positioned southeast facing northwest, in the correct geomantic position of the element metal divided by the branch yin and the stem *shen*; his tombstone was a triangle. It was nine chi high, and one *chi*, six *cun*, wide. The stone was called the “long life stone,” and on it were inscribed sixteen words, each of which began with the “water” or “three dot” radical, so that all together there were forty-eight dots of water.

Document 6: The “Xi Lu Xu” or Preface Version

The Xi Lu Preface was discovered by Xiao Yishan in the British Museum in the early 1930’s. It was first published in his book *jindai mimi shehui shiliao*, juan 2: 3b—7a, and then in *Tiandibui*, 1: 41—46. This version is somewhat similar to the one in J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling, *The Hung Society or the Society of Heaven and Earth*, pp. 30—45. It is ascribed to the late Xianfeng-early Tongzhi period (1851—74).

In the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign [1714], the Xi Lu invaded the borders and seized the country. Everyday life in all its forms was disrupted by the war. The Qing troops went out to meet the enemy, but they suffered repeated defeats and were unable to obtain a victory. The defeated general, Guo Tinghui, went back to the court with a memorial to the emperor. The great officials prostrated themselves and memorialized: “Now that Guo Tinghui has returned from the border with a memorial asking for help, we advocate approving the memorial and making a final decision.”

The Kangxi Emperor asked them what plans they had.

The great officials prostrated themselves and memorialized: “Because we do not have any good generals capable of defeating them, and it will be difficult to obtain a victory, we think Your Majesty should issue an imperial notice, to be promulgated to all under Heaven, that no matter whether military personnel, Buddhists or Daoists, anyone able to quell the Xi Lu kingdom will be rewarded with 1,000 gold [pieces] and invested with the office of Wanhua Marquis [10,000 Household Marquis].”

The various officials received the edict and withdrew from the emperor. In the Shaolin monastery of Jiulian Mountain, Pulong county, Fujian [not a real place], there were 128 monks. When they heard of this affair, they went to see the imperial notice and then tore it down.

The officials asked them, “What ability do you monks have, that you dare to tear down the imperial notice?”

The monks replied, “We brothers will not use one imperial soldier or general, but we will be able to suppress the Xi Lu kingdom.”

Struck by the monks’ tone of voice, the officials immediately instructed them, “Return to the monastery to obtain your weapons and effects. Then, at dawn we will set out together for Beijing, where you may receive your orders and go meet the enemy.”

The monks returned to the monastery as instructed and, each carrying his own bag, went to Beijing with the officials. They spent about twenty days traveling to Beijing and entered the Wuchao Gate; from there some of the officials then went to the big hall of the Military Board and informed the top officials of their arrival. At dawn the next morning, as the gong sounded, the emperor came to court and asked the ministers what they had to report.

The high officials memorialized in reply: “Your Majesty, the monks from the Shaolin monastery at Jiulian Mountain in Pulong county, Fuzhou prefecture, Fujian, are now here and want to receive the royal order.”

The emperor said, “Summon them to see me.”

The high officials then passed on the imperial edict that His Majesty wanted the monks to come in to receive the imperial order. The monks prostrated themselves in front of the emperor. Kangxi was very happy and immediately invested the Shaolin monks as *tidubing* [provincial commander’s troops], and then rewarded them with a chop and a valuable sword. This chop was inscribed with the four words *Ri Shan wei ji* [“Sun Mountain as a sign”?]. The chop was in the shape of a triangle and cast of iron.

That very day, they held the prewar sacrifices and ceremonies, raised troops and banners, and received the imperial edict to quell the Xi Lu. [The emperor] also ordered Zheng Junda to go forward with the supplies. The group went forth and engaged in battle with the Xi Lu. Hardly had three months passed before the monks had completely subdued the Xi Lu and returned to the capital. The high and low officials of the Manchu dynasty all went out ten *li* to the Chang pavilion to welcome the monks back home to see the emperor.

Later, people composed a poem to praise them:

The heroes are number one; no one can compare to them.

[An unintelligible line with missing characters]

Returning from the front after victory, they enter the Wu Gate with songs and cheers.

After defeating the Xi Lu at one fell swoop,

The heroes while singing songs are now back in China.

The great officials memorialized, and [the emperor] said, "Inform the Buddhist monks to prepare for their investiture."

The monks memorialized: "Your Majesty, we brothers are monks and dare not receive investiture."

The great officials also memorialized: "Since they won't receive investiture, You [the emperor] can reward them with a thousand ounces of yellow gold and hold a vegetarian banquet to send them back to their temple to resume their lives as priests."

The monks thanked the emperor, [who also] invested Zheng Junda as the general [*zongzhen*] of Fenzhou and ordered him to set out at once to take up his post in Huguang. The emperor, asking all the civil and military officials to accompany the monks out of the Wuchao Gate, then dismissed the court and sent them on their way. The officials received the imperial edict. It was at that time that Zheng Junda and the monks came to the temple and performed the eight acknowledgments [*bai*].⁴ Zheng Junda set off for Huguang to assume his position.

Afterward, there were two treacherous officials named Jianqiu [later on, we are given his surname, Zhang] and Chen Hong, who together thought of a plot to harm the monks at Shaolin. They returned to the capital and secretly memorialized: "Your Majesty, the Shaolin monks are as ferocious as wolves and tigers. If they became disloyal, Your Majesty's land (rivers and mountains) would be difficult to protect. Moreover, the monks and Zheng Junda have the eight worships or acknowledgments, and [we] fear they are plotting rebellion. We fear that the country is not safe."

The Kangxi Emperor asked, "What plan do you two have?"

The two treacherous officials memorialized: "We have a scheme. The Lantern Festival is on the fifteenth day of the first month. Your Majesty can order us two officials to lead troops with saltpeter and other firesetting materials to convey an imperial banquet as reward to the monks to express his heartfelt gratitude. [You] can also order one high official to carry an imperial order to Zheng Junda, the general of Fenzhou, and bestow upon him the 'red silk' [*hongluo*; with which he was supposed to commit suicide]. [You] can accuse him of plotting rebellion for which he is deserving of death."

The two officials received the imperial edict. The next morning, each of them led troops from his own province to carry out the imperial order.

On the way to the Shaolin monastery, Zhang Jianqiu arrived in the vicinity of Wangquan, where on the road he happened to encounter Ma Ninger, who was working as a cart driver. Zhang Jianqiu invited Ma to dine with him. On the way, Zhang asked Ma many questions and rewarded him with wine and meat. Ma Ninger really liked to drink and what is more, he was really selfish and unmindful of others, so he told Zhang everything.

Ninger said, "I only know a little bit. I used to be a water carrier at the Shaolin monastery, but because I was not careful and broke the incense burner, they drove me out. At present I can only work as the driver of a cart at Wangquan place to earn a living. Now, I am honored that you care about me and am grateful for your kindness. Of course I will do my best to get you there and am willing to show you the way."

Zhang Jianqiu replied, "I received an imperial order to set fire to the Shaolin monastery. Which is the main road and which is the back or private way?"

He then brought Ninger along to show him the way and help him set the fire and carry out the plan. The men quickly reached the Shaolin monastery. Upon hearing that Zhang Jianqiu had come with an imperial order, the monks sent out two persons to meet them and escort them to the monastery to drink tea and smoke.

Jianqiu said, "We have received an order to reward you once more with imperial wine." The monks expressed their gratitude by replying, "Thank you again, Your Excellency, for taking the trouble of such a long and tiring trip."

Then the monks realized that this wine was different from other wine, so they put the sword left by the founder of the monastery into the wine and saw that it gave off an offensive black air and knew that it was poison.

The monks said, "Why shouldn't we take the advantage of acting first?" They were just about to kill Jianqiu when they saw the fire raging inside the monastery and out in every direction.

By the time they saw the fire, it was the third watch, and the other monks were caught unprepared, fast asleep. It is not known how many burned to death. The eighteen [who survived] then carried off the seal and sword to the hall at the rear of the temple. Kneeling in front of the image of Buddha, they prayed for an escape from this disaster. The Daluo Shenxian [Daluo deity, made up by the legend's authors] then ordered Zhu Kai and Zhu Jiang to go down and change into yellow and black roads to save the eighteen monks in difficulty. The eighteen monks then escaped out of the monastery gate and saw Ma Ninger there.

The monks said to themselves, "Wasn't it he who led the soldiers on this road and set fire to the monastery?"

They all thought that he was seeking revenge for having been thrown out of the order. The brothers then killed him. But after the killing was over, many fierce and brave Qing troops arrived, so it was difficult to obtain victory. Also, the monks had no weapons, and several had been injured by the fire. They all fled and kept running until it was light. They passed Wangquan place and reached Changsha Bay in the midst of terrible wind and snow. They were all hungry, and thirteen monks starved to death, so that only five remained. These five ran to the riverbank and fortunately were saved by Xie Bangheng and Wu Tinggui. The five monks stayed on the boat, where they were not pursued. This is the end of this story for a while.

[Meanwhile] Chen Hong led his troops out and soon reached Fenzhou, Huguang. When Zheng Junda heard of their arrival, he immediately sent out a few soldiers to welcome them.

Chen Hong proclaimed, "Zheng Junda and the monks of Shaolin formed an association [*jiebai*] and plotted rebellion. The emperor ordered us to come to bestow on Junda the 'red silk' with which to commit suicide."

Zheng Junda killed himself out of loyalty to the emperor. Chen Hong then cast aside Junda's corpse at Xiagangwei, Huguang. They returned at once to report that the imperial order had been carried out, and this is the end of this story for a while.

Some soldiers went to Zheng Junda's home to make a report of the imperial edict and the bestowal of the "red silk" order to commit suicide to his wife and son.

Guo Xiuying was Junda's wife; Daode was Junda's son; Yulan was Junda's younger sister; and Daofang was Yulan's son. When they learned of this affair, these four persons set off for [Xia]gangwei to look for the corpse and bury it. They buried him [Zheng Junda] and returned home.

As for the five monks, with gratitude they left Xie [Bangheng] and Wu [Tinggui]. The five [monks], Cai, Fang, Ma, Hu, and Li, went to the Gaoxi temple at Black Dragon Mound [Wulonggang] to seek a place to stay. Fortunately, there was a man named Huang Changcheng and his wife, surnamed Zhong, who received them and let them stay. The five told their story of injustice. They stayed there half a month, at which point Qing troops heard of their location and arrived to arrest them. When the five heard about the arrival of the troops, they immediately said goodbye to the head of the temple [*miaozhu*] and set off. They went to a place in Huguang, the Xiapu convent, of the Xiushen monastery of the Lingwang temple, where they stayed. One day as they went out to relax, they came to Xiagangwei and saw that there was a white ingot incense burner on the water's edge. The five monks saw that it was made of a kind of greenstone and that it had two ears and three feet. The monks picked it up and were impressed to see on the bottom the four words *Fan-Qing fu-Ming*. They then took a bowl with flowers as a cup [divining block], cast it up three times, and when it did not break, said, "Is this not [a signal] that we five will have a day of revenge?"

They again cast the cup three times and used grass as incense. As they inserted it into the incense burner, they discovered inside a small parcel wrapped in beautiful brocade. While they were discussing the matter, the Qing troops suddenly arrived to arrest them. At this time, the five monks saw that with their scant numbers they would be unable to withstand the enemy. Also, they had no weapons, so they were only able to extricate themselves and flee.

At that moment, the members of the Zheng family arrived to hold a memorial service [offer sacrifices] at the tomb. From the top of the tomb there unexpectedly emerged a magic sword with a peachwood handle. On the top of the blade were two dragons fighting for a pearl, and on the end [lit., tail] were the four words *Fan-Qing fu-Ming*.

The women and children saw the Qing troops pursuing the five monks. They then used the magic sword bravely and forced the Qing troops to retreat. They then told the monks what had happened. The widow said, "Because my husband was associated with you, he was persecuted to death by some treacherous officials and is buried here."

The five monks knelt down to pay their respects and said that they too had been misused by the traitors and so had fled to this place. "Fortunately, we encountered you and your son, who rescued us, but we do not know when we can return your kindness."

The wife replied that this was not a good place to talk about the matter and asked them to return with her and to stay overnight. Tomorrow they could return to the monastery together.

At that time, there were five others, Wu Tiancheng, Hong Taisui, Li Sekai, Tao Bida, and Lin Yongzhao, horse-sellers in Zhejiang and Shandong provinces, who also reached the Lingwang temple and encountered Cai, Fang, Ma, Hu, and Li. Everybody discussed the situation and, deciding to join forces in forming a sworn brotherhood, they vowed, to the death, to carry out the affair [i.e., avenge the injustice done to them] together.

There was also a Daoist "master" [*xiansheng*] Chen Jinnan at the White Crane Cave [Baihedong]. He used preaching the Way in all the villages as a pretext to recruit loyal and intelligent people. [The group] then talked about the affair with Du Fang, Du Long, He Kai, Chen Biao, and Jinnan. The five monks, Cai, Fang, Ma, Hu, and Li, then went back to the Xiapu convent. Again, they were pursued by the Qing troops that were seeking to arrest them.

Fortunately, in the mountain forests, they were rescued by the Five Tiger Generals of Dragon Tiger Mountain, to whom they recounted their tale of injustice. After introducing themselves to one another, the Five Tiger Generals, Wu Tianyou, Fang Huicheng, Zhang Jingzhao, Lin Dajiang, and Yang Wenzuo, asked the five monks, "Why don't you stay on our mountain for two or three months? Afterward, [you can] descend the mountain and go to the Vast Flower pavilion [Honghuating] to recruit troops and supplies? How about it?"

It happened that "master" Jinnan came for a visit, and when the monks asked his name, he replied, "I am Chen Jinnan, who formerly worked at the Hanlin Academy and held office in the Great Hall of the Military Board. Because there were too many traitorous officials, I left my post and went to the White Crane Cave to become a Daoist. Now I heard about your affair and have come to help you. We will wipe out all the traitors and get revenge."

The monks and the Five Generals replied, "It is really fortunate that you came to join us; now we can obtain victory. Today, the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month, we will take a blood oath."

They set the fifteenth day of the eighth month as the day on which to send out troops to meet the enemy. To recruit the troops, they displayed a big banner with the words *Tianting guoshi* ["Heavenly court as national model"]¹ and recruited 107 men.

There also arrived a little lord [*xiaozhu*], Zhu Hongzhu, who came to join them. He carried no weapons, and said, "I am not like other people; I am the little lord Zhu Hongzhu, the grandson of Emperor Chongzhen and the concubine Li Shen."

The brothers then acknowledged him as their head, Jinnan as their "master" [*xiansheng*], He Kai and Chen Biao as guards [*shoufu*], Du Fang and Du Long as "great vanguard generals" [*da jiangjun*], Wu, Hong, Tao, Li, and Lin as the left battalion, the Five Generals, Wu, Fang, Zhang, Yang, and Lin, as the right battalion, and the five monks, Cai, Fang, Ma, Hu, Li, as the rear battalion. Together, they swore a blood oath [*shaxue huimeng*].

Also, Su Hongguang arrived to join them. When "master" Chen Jinnan saw his bravery, he immediately named him as vanguard [*xianfeng*]. Together, they cut paths through mountains and built bridges over the rivers. Unexpectedly, the eastern Heaven turned red, so they took Hong as their surname, and loyalty and righteousness as their principle. Su Hongguang changed his name to Tian Youhong. They raised their banner and conducted the pre-battle ceremonies, and passed through Wanyun Mountain in Zhejiang province.

Wan Yunlong was a native of Fupo county in Taichang prefecture. At home, he was called Da Zong, but when he left home, his Buddhist name was He Man. At home, he had three sons. The eldest was named Teng, the next was named Cheng, and the third was named Biao. Unfortunately, he killed someone, [and so] left home and became a monk. He went out the door [of his monastery] and in the distance saw men and horses passing one by one in front of the mountain. Noticing the monks' flags in their midst, Yunlong asked the monks into the monastery and said to them, "For what purpose have you mobilized troops today?"

The brothers replied, "The Qing emperor is not just. He turned our gratitude into revenge by burning the Shaolin monastery to the ground and killing our monks. We are now raising troops to get our revenge."

After hearing all this, Yunlong also felt the injustice. The brothers saw that he had a just heart, so they immediately acknowledged him as their "elder brother" and designated him as their commander-in-chief [*shuai*]. Yunlong assented.

Yunlong's height was several yards [*zhang*]; his head was big like a grain measure [*dou*]; he had red whiskers, and he used a double-dragon club as a weapon.

The men raised troops and went to Five Phoenix [Wufeng] Mountain to do battle. There were several battles, and Yunlong fell from his horse and died beneath Shican Cliff. Using astrology, "master" Jinnan saw that this was not the end of his own troops.

"Elder brother" Wan died on the ninth day of the ninth month. The brothers asked the "master" what plans he had, and they then took the corpse, cremated it, and buried it at the foot of the mountain. They laid out the tomb in the proper direction, from southeast to northwest, so the geomantic position was of the element metal divided by the branch *yin* and the stem *shen*. At the place where he was buried, the earth was in the contour of an octagon. In front was a nine-tiered pagoda and behind was Twelve Summit [Shi'erfeng] Mountain. On the tombstone were sixteen words, each character of which had the water radical, which read: "Received his position at the Changlin monastery. Opened the First Branch [?] in the mountain. The tomb of Monk Da Zong Gong."

The "master" said, "Why don't we scatter to the various provinces, change our names, and wait until the day comes when Heaven must extinguish [the Qing], and [all can] 'Obey Heaven and follow the Way' [Shun-Tian xingdao]? [Let us] set up under Heaven and on Earth a five-color banner, poems, and codes, so that on a later day they will serve as a symbol of mutual recognition if we should meet again [in order to] 'overthrow the Qing, and restore the Ming.'"

Then the list:

Former Five Lodges [the original five monks]: Cai, Fang, Ma, Hu, Li

Later Five Lodges [horse-sellers]: Wu, Hong, Tao, Li, Lin

Five Tiger Generals: Wu, Fang, Zhang, Yang, Lin

The Former Five Lodges [went] to [these] provinces to foment uprisings:

Cai Dezhong to Fujian

Fang Dahong to Guangdong

Ma Chaoxing to Yunnan and Guangxi

Hu Dedi to Huguang

Li Sekai to Zhejiang¹¹

The Later Five Lodges [went to these places]:

Wu Tiancheng to Xishu [Western Sichuan]

Hong Dasui to Guizhou

Li Shidi to Jiangnan

Tao Bida to Yunnan

Lin Yongzhao to Henan

“Master” Chen Jinnan left for Baihedong [White Crane Cave], and Eldest Lodge Cai Dezhong raised an uprising in Fujian.

The eight things worshipped or acknowledged [*bai*]:

First worship: Heaven as Father

Second worship: Earth as Mother

Third worship: Sun as Elder Brother

Fourth worship: Moon as Sister-in-law

Fifth worship: The Holy Immortals—Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, Chuangzi, Laozi

Sixth worship: Wan Yunlong

Seventh worship: The Brotherhood

Eighth worship: Long life

Document 7: The Hirayama Version

This version was turned up by the Japanese activist Hirayama Shu in the early twentieth century and is translated from the Chinese edition of his book *Zhongguo mimi shehuishi*, pp. 215—20. (It has also been translated into English by James Hutson: “Chinese Secret Societies,” pp. 215—20.) Hirayama’s account is similar to the one in William Stanton, *The Triad Society*, pp. 29—38, but unfortunately Stanton did not provide a Chinese text. This version probably dates from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

In the Kangxi period (some say Qianlong era), there was in the west of China a dependency called Xi Lu (but the specific identity of this country is not known, although some say that it was Tibet), whose king rebelled and invaded the borders. The Qing troops sent out to quell them were all defeated, so the Qing emperor decided to offer a reward. No matter whether rich or poor, male or female, or priest or monk, anyone able to pacify the Xi Lu would receive the reward. There was then in Shaolin monastery a monk named Zheng Junda, who was exceptionally brave and excelled in martial arts. The imperial proclamation ignited his great ambition. He gathered 128 monks who were willing to accept the offer and were determined to expel the Xi Lu. They went to Beijing and had an audience with the emperor, who asked where they were from and what talents or resources they had at hand.

The monks replied that they came from the Shaolin monastery and were all versed in martial arts. The emperor was very happy. He incorporated them into the imperial army and invested their leader as a “brigade-general.” He then asked what troops and supplies they needed.

The monks replied that they needed not a single soldier, only plenty of horses and rations for the campaign. The Qing emperor agreed and bestowed upon them full authority for the punitive expedition and a sword inscribed with the four words *Jia hou ri shan* (“Home behind sun mountain”).

The monks selected an auspicious day and set out on their campaign. After crossing mountains and water, in not many days they arrived at the Xi Lu border and began preparing their defenses. The Xi Lu immediately heard of their arrival and suddenly came forth to attack. The monks’ army switched from defense to offense, defeated them in the first battle, and in subsequent engagements killed their leaders and took their flags.

The Xi Lu king, seeing that it was impossible to resist, came to ask for negotiations and promised to continue yearly tribute to the Qing emperor. The monks’ army returned home in less than three months without losing a single soldier or weapon. Upon their return, the emperor, in accord with his promise, wanted to give them whatever they wanted, but the monks desired nothing but permission to return to their monastery, leaving behind only their general Zheng Junda in the position of brigade-general. The emperor then honored them with an imperial banquet and presented them with untold amounts of gold, silver, and silk, along with an imperial plaque with four laudatory characters of imperial calligraphy, which read “Boundless imperial favor, kindness, and honor.” The emperor also bestowed upon them a set of couplets that extolled their unprecedented bravery, applauded their use of the martial arts instead of literary skills to show their loyalty, and praised their dedication to both the imperial and the Buddhist cause.

The emperor himself saw them off, and they were escorted back to Shaolin. On their way, the local residents came out to welcome them, and upon seeing so many imperial gifts, deemed the monks beyond compare.

At that time there were two officials, Chen Wenyao and Zhang Jinqiu, who were plotting rebellion. Because they feared the strength of the Shaolin army, they dared not carry out their plan. So they set about instead to undermine the emperor's confidence in the priests. They pointed out that on repeated occasions the imperial forces suffered defeat, but that the monks easily defeated the Xi Lu, and told the emperor to think what would happen if they contemplated revolt, how easy it would be for them to overthrow the throne and what a danger they were to the country.

The frightened emperor then asked the two officials what should be done. They suggested using 300 or 400 guard troops to destroy the monastery. The emperor did not agree, so they asked to use fire to burn it down. To this the emperor agreed, and the two officials at the head of several hundred soldiers set off for Fujian.

The Jiulian Mountain was remote, and the monastery difficult to find. They were just in the process of searching for it when they ran into Ma Yifu, who was willing to be their guide. Among the Shaolin monks, Ma had been number seven in martial arts. However, because he was very licentious and had seduced Zheng Junda's wife, Guo Xiuying, and his sister Zheng Yulan, he was no longer esteemed by the monks and had been driven out.

Ma had since harbored thoughts of revenge and was always ready to assist anyone intent on harming the monastery. Chen and Zhang found him valuable, and thus tempted him with official rank. In the dead of night Ma led them to the monastery. After burying the gunpowder and surrounding it with straw and faggots, they used pine incense to light the fire. The explosion that followed shook heaven and destroyed the monastery, which was burned to ruins.

At that moment, the Dazun deity, who founded the monastery, manifested his help by sending two angels, Zhu Kai and Zhu Guang, to rescue eighteen of the monks. When Ma Yifu saw the monks fleeing, he called the soldiers to follow in pursuit. Suddenly a thick fog appeared, causing those in pursuit to lose their way and allowing the monks to reach Shawankou.

En route they had to pass through Huangquan village, where thirteen monks were killed in battle. The survivors pledged that they would avenge the dead no matter how long they had to fight. The names of the five monks who survived were Cai Dezhong, Fang Dahong, Ma Chaoxing, Hu Dedi, and Li Shikai, and they are known as the "early five ancestors." Later Ma Yifu was killed by this party of friends, and because he had been number seven in the hierarchy, thereafter, to this day, the society has prohibited the use of the number seven.

The five monks then cremated the bodies of their dead friends and buried the ashes. They next concealed themselves under a bridge where there was a boat at anchor. The boatmen, Xie Bangheng and Wu Tingfen, willingly helped them and welcomed them on board to stay. The monks set out the next day after having given the boatmen a secret signal so that they might recognize each other in the future. The five monks had not left Huangquan village when suddenly a company of soldiers arrived to search for them. There were five brave men, Wu Tianyou, Fang Huicheng, Zhang Jingzhao, Yang Changzuo, and Lin Dajiang. The monks told them about the affair of persecution, and so, with the help of these men, the monks were able to flee to safety again.

When they reached Changsha Bay in Huizhou prefecture, the pursuing troops came again in their wake. As the monks were about to be cut off by a large river, the spirit Dazun again sent the two angels to help them. One carried an iron plank, and one a brass plank, from which they made a bridge over which the monks escaped to the Baozhu monastery and from there to the Gaoxi temple in Shicheng county. There the angels also gave them food and other necessities. Three of the monks were then exceedingly worn out, so they helped each other and forced themselves to keep going east. As for the temple there, it disappeared several days later, which shocked the residents in the neighborhood.

For fear of being pursued again, the monks fled to Huguang. They came to a Hell King temple, where the guard Huang Changcheng and his wife named Chong took them in. They stayed there half a month, from where they next arrived at Ding Mountain, which had a small port. There, they unexpectedly encountered Guo Xiuying, the wife of their former friend, Zheng Junda, along with her sister, Zheng Yulan, and her two sons, Zheng Daode and Zheng Daofang. Thereupon they formed a small league and went to the tomb of Zheng Junda. By this time, Zheng Junda had already used a red silk cord to strangle himself upon orders from Chen Wenyao.

They proceeded to the tomb for the sacrifice when a troop of soldiers suddenly arrived. At the critical moment when the monks could find no way to protect themselves, a sword suddenly emerged from Zheng Junda's grave. Guo Xiuying seized it. On the handle of the sword were the characters "Fan-Qing fu-Ming."¹ Also engraved were two dragons fighting for a pearl.

Guo Xiuying took the sword and brandished it wildly, beheading an unknown number of soldiers and thus saving the band. When Zhang Jinqu heard of her action, he sent a company of soldiers and ordered them to seize Guo Xiuying. Sensing what was to happen, Guo Xiuying gave the sword to her two sons, ordered them to flee with it, and then drowned herself in the Sanhe River with Zheng Yulan. Xie Bangheng recovered the corpses, buried them by the river, and set up a tombstone with an epitaph.

Upon learning that Zhang Jinqu was so cruel, the five monks intended to kill him, so they hid in a forest waiting for their chance. When the soldiers were off guard, they rushed in and killed their enemy Zhang. The soldiers, on seeing their leader fall, turned in anger and counterpursued. The monks, however, were saved by Wu Tiancheng, Hong Taisui, Yao Bida, Li Shidi, and Lin Yongchao, who became the society's "later five ancestors" and were also known as the "five tigers." The five monks then returned to the Gaoxi temple and afterward to Baozhuyuan, all the while undergoing much hardship and suffering.

At this point they met Chen Jinnan, the future founding father [of the society] and a former Hanlin scholar. Chen had tried but failed to persuade the emperor not to burn the Shaolin monastery. Seeing that he could not change the situation resulting from the calumny of Chen Wenyao and Zhang Jinqu, he had to resign his post, because he deplored the persecution of those monks and was acquainted with many other monks. His home was in Huguang. After returning home, he came to White Crane Cave [Baihedong] to study Daoism. Later, he also intended to avenge the monks. For this purpose, he became an itinerant diviner and thus could meet with the five monks. Taking great pity on the worn-out monks, he brought them into his home. That is why today when the society's members meet and are asked from where they came, they must answer: "from the White Crane Cave."

Later Chen Jinnan decided that his house was too small and unsuitable for the purpose of plotting rebellion, so he said to the monks that not far away was Xiapu convent, which had a big hall known as the Red Flower pavilion (Honghuating).² He said that they could use this, and the monks could live there to plan revenge. Everybody agreed and so they all moved there.

One day the monks were walking by the riverside when they saw something floating on the water. Surprised, they pulled it out and discovered that it was a large stone incense burner. On turning it over, they discovered that it was inscribed with the four characters *Fan-Qing fu-Ming*. There was also a line of notes in small characters stating that it weighed fifty-two catties, thirteen *liang* [ounces]. It was similar to the white pewter incense burners used by the society today. The incense burner had originally been lost from Hangzhou. Thereupon, they decided to light it, and the monks gathered sticks and grass to substitute for candles and incense. They used water as wine.

The monks prayed to Heaven and Earth and asked that they be enabled to avenge the destruction of Shaolin. Suddenly the grass and sticks self-combusted, and the monks regarded it as Heaven's answer to their prayer. They returned to the Red Flower pavilion and informed Chen Jinnan, who interpreted the episode to mean that overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming was Heaven's desire, and that the time to act was already upon them.

That day they unfurled the flag and issued the proclamation for recruits. At that time there appeared a youth of red lips and fair complexion with arms so long that they extended to his knees and ears whose lobes extended to his shoulders. He resembled Liu Bei [one of the three heroes of *Water Margin*]. Everyone saw that his appearance and bearing were unusual and began questioning him about his origins. He said, "I am Zhu Hongzhu, the grandson of Chongzhen and Concubine Li. The former emperor was overthrown by the northern barbarians, so as his grandson, I have long cherished the wish for revenge. Now seeing you launching an uprising for the sake of the Ming Dynasty, I have come to help you." When the monks heard this, they made him their lord [*zhu*]. They selected the following day as a lucky one and carried out their sacrifice to the flag.

When they were all assembled under the flag, Chen Jinnan told them to select another auspicious day to smear blood and take an oath. Those who swore the oath would be "elder brothers," while those who joined later would be the "younger brothers." Chen then declared himself "incense master" [*xiangzhu*]. He selected the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the *jiayin* year as the date for the brothers to swear their oath at the Red Flower pavilion.

The various society members still regard this day as the birthday of the society, which was said to be the

great gathering of the “Hong” family.

That night both the north and the south sky were unusually bright and there was a falling star whose path wrote the four characters “*wen ting guo shi*” [these words do not translate into anything that makes sense today]. Chen Jinnan regarded this as Heaven’s intent, and so he used the four characters on the flag of the *yuanshuai* (“generalissimo/commander-in-chief”). A red light also shown in the eastern sky. Because the pronunciation of *hong* in the character “red” was the same as that of the *hong* of Zhu Hongzhu’s name, the monks decided to change their surnames to Hong, which would be referred to by the code “three, eight, twenty-one.”²

Chen Jinnan took charge and designated Su Hongguang as the vanguard [*xianfeng*]; and Wu, Hong, Yao, Li, and Lin, together with the five monks, as the middle guard. He ordered Wu, Fang, Zhang, Yang, and Lin to Dragon Tiger [Longhu] Mountain to gather the soldiers and horses and to prepare the supplies.

Chen Jinnan then issued the order to attack the Qing army the next day. The Qing army was unexpectedly strong and, in one battle, defeated the Hong army in the middle of the mountain. Thereupon Chen Jinnan called a meeting and the monks decided to withdraw temporarily to Wanyun Mountain.

When they passed by the Wanyun monastery, its abbot Wan Yunlong learned about this. Yunlong (also known as Da Zong) was from Taichang prefecture, Zhejiang. His original name was Hu Deqi. His bearing was martial and his strength superior to most, but in his youth, he had killed someone, and so fearing the law, had put on the robes of a monk.

On seeing the monks’ army in retreat, he, in surprise, asked the reason why, and after being informed he was enraged. He vowed revenge on the Manchu dogs [*hu gou*]. He swore he must wipe out the Qing army to expiate the “young emperor’s” shame. Chen Jinnan, upon seeing his bravery and determination, introduced him to the “little emperor” and referred to him as “elder brother.” Wan Yunlong then swore a blood oath not to rest until he had overthrown the Qing and restored the Ming.

On the twentieth day of the eighth month there was another battle. Wan Yunlong fought for several days with two clubs, but unfortunately, on the ninth day of the ninth month, he was shot and killed by an enemy arrow. When the rest of the soldiers saw that the “elder brother” had fallen, they fled. The five monks hid until the Qing troops had withdrawn. Then, they cremated the body of Wan Yunlong, wrapped it in red silk, and buried it under Ding Mountain.

In front of the tomb there was a meandering river; behind was a mountain of thirteen peaks; on the right were five trees; and on the left was one tree. They served as landmarks. Chen Jinnan deified Wan Yunlong as “Da Zong Shen” and built a three-cornered pagoda to his memory called Wannianta, which was the so-called Nine Tongues pagoda [*Jiuhuata*] that is often drawn in secret pictures.

After the burial, the monks looked around for the young emperor but could find no trace of his whereabouts, so they discussed the future. Chen Jinnan said that because of the defeat, he realized the time to overthrow the Qing was not yet at hand, but [he predicted that] it wouldn’t be long before the dynasty would be destroyed and the Ming revived. He urged the men not to be frustrated by the defeat, but to stick to their purpose. He also advised all brothers to hide separately among the rivers, lakes, and mountains, to nurture their zeal, strength, and spirit, to await the designated day, and to recruit disciples and spread the sacred codes, so that when the day came, they would be able to achieve victory.

Chen also said that now they had to part and scatter to await their opportunity, but if the day came when the Hong family could succeed, all of them were expected to come together to fulfill their promise. He then said goodbye to his brothers and left. The rest also set out separately. Before leaving, however, they composed a poem as a kind of proof that would enable them to recognize one another after a long separation. The poem said, “Five men separate, but each carries a poem; no one knows of their bravery; this affair will be transmitted to their brothers; afterward, they will set a date to assemble.”³

This [poem] was to unite the various members and serve as proof.

After they scattered, various individuals traveled to various provinces and spread the teaching for several years. Later, at Gaoxi temple, in Huizhou prefecture, they gathered together again to plan their uprising. As for the original leaders [*toumu*] who were still living, there was only Su [Hong]guang, but Su also died soon after that. Su’s death left the movement in a crisis. However, [a rumor] suddenly spread that Su had come to life again. His resurrection was mysterious, but, obviously, this myth was intended to encourage the idea of restoring the Ming and unifying the members.

According to what they said, when the Chongzhen Emperor strangled himself, Beijing was being invaded

by Li Zicheng. The emperor hanged himself from a cypress tree. The emperor had a very trusted eunuch named Huang Chengsi, who hoped to be buried in the Ming tombs. He intended to hang himself together with the emperor, but there was not a separate branch of the cypress tree on which to hang himself. He next considered hanging on the same branch but feared his status was not such as to allow him to hang on the same branch, so he decided to hang at the emperor's feet. Later, when the emperor's body was discovered and people saw the situation, they did not regard him [Huang] as a loyal official, but rather as a rebel. When the emperor's body was buried in the Ming tombs, Huang's body was cast out without proper sacrifices to wander as a ghost without a place to which to return. When the great army gathered at the Gaoxi temple, the Damo Buddha took pity on this wandering spirit and ordered it to enter the corpse of Su Hongguang, who thus came to life again. His name was changed to Tian Youhong, and he became the leader of the Sanhe army. Under his command, the Sanhe army fought several victorious battles and conquered seven provinces, but unfortunately, he was killed in Sichuan by the Qing army. Thereupon the Sanhe army scattered, and the seven provinces reverted to the rule of the Qing.

Appendix C

The Founding of Secret Societies, 1728-1850

The following table is based largely on charts in Zhuang Jifa "Qingdai Min-Yue diqu de renkou liudong yu mimi huidang de fazhan," pp. 13—14, 21—22, and "Qingdai shehui jingji bianqian yu mimi huidang de fazhan: Taiwan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou diqu de bijiao yanjiu," pp. 65—67, 78.

We have added a few items we ran across in preparing this study, but the table still makes no pretense of being comprehensive and should not be used for statistical purposes of any sort. Moreover, we cannot really vouch for all of Zhuang's data, since he merely gives his sources as the National Palace Archives (Gongzhongdang), the Grand Council Archives (Junjichudang), and the *da-Qing shilu*, without stating which items came from which documents.

There are other data problems as well. We cannot tell from Zhuang's column heading "Name" whether the person listed was the founder or an important member of the associated society. All we can say, from the information we have been able to verify, is that the person listed under this category was usually the principal offender in a case being memorialized to the emperor by a governor-general, and that in some instances, he was the founder of a society, and in others an inductee, who may or may not have gone on to found a chapter or chapters on his own. Additionally, there are some inconsistencies between Zhuang's table data and the information he provides in the more elaborate descriptions in the text—notably in the spelling of people's names and the date or place of a society's founding. The items we have been able to verify have been corrected. In the other cases, we have assumed that the text is probably more accurate than the tables and have changed our entries accordingly.

Incomplete and problematical as our table is, it is still useful, we believe, in showing how certain societies or branches came into being. It also indicates the mobility that went hand in hand with the spread of the groups; few of the people listed formed (or joined) societies in their hometowns.

Society Formation, 1728—1850

Reign date (Western year)	Society name	Founder or principal member		
		Name	Place of origin	Place of founding
Yongzheng				
6/1 (1728)	Fumuhui	Chen Bin	Zhangzhou, F	Zhuluo, T
6/3 (1728)	Fumuhui	Cai Yin, Tang Wan	—; Zhangzhou, F	Zhuluo, T
7 (1729)	Zilonghui	—	—	—
10 (1730)	One Piece of Money	Li Cai	—	Amoy, F
9 (1731)	Fumuhui	Yu Mao	F/GD border	Raoping, GD
13 (1735)	Iron Ruler	—	Anhui	Ninghua, F
Qianlong				
7 (1742)	Small Knife	—		Zhangpu, F
7 (1742)	Son of Dragon	—	Zhaoan, GD	Pinghe, F
17/3 (1752)	Iron Ruler	Jiang Mao	Jianyang, F	Shaowu, F
26 (1761)	Tiandihui	Wan Ti Xi	Zhangpu, F	Huizhou, GD
37/1 (1772)	Small Knife	Lin Da	F	Zhanghua, T
38 (1773)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
39 (1774)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
40 (1775)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
44 (1779)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
45/9 (1780)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
46/11 (1781–82)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
47/8 (1782)	Small Knife	Huang Tian	Zhangzhou, F	Changhua, T
48 (1782)	Tiandihui	Chen Biao	Huizhou, GD	Pinghe, F
48 (1783)	Tiandihui	Yan Yan	Pinghe, F	Zhanghua, T
49 (1786)	Tiandihui	Lin Shuangwen	Pinghe, F	Zhanghua, T
51 (1786)	Tiandihui	Huang Arui	Zhaoan, F	Raoping, GD

Reign date (Western year)	Society name	Founder or principal member		
		Name	Place of origin	Place of founding
51/5 (1786)	Tiandihui	Zhong Xiang	Wuping, F	Zhanghua, T
51/5 (1786)	Tiandihui	Zhang Wen	Changtai, F	Zhanghua, T
51/6 (1786)	Increase Brothers	Yang Guangxun	F	Zhuluo, T
51/6 (1786)	Leigonghui	Yang Mashi	F	Zhuluo, T
51/6 (1786)	Tiandihui	Lin Gongyu	Raoping, GD	Pinghe, F
51/7 (1786)	Tiandihui	Lai A'en	Raoping, GD	Fuxing, F
51/8 (1786)	Tiandihui	—	—	Zhanghua, T
51/10 (1786)	Tiandihui	Zhu Kai	Pinghe, F	Zhanghua, T
51/10 (1786)	Tiandihui	Xu Axie	Raoping, GD	Pinghe, F
51/10 (1786)	Tiandihui	Lin Ajun	Raoping, GD	Shizhou, F
51/11 (1786–87)	Tiandihui	Chen Qiao	Zhangpu, F	Zhanghua, T
52/10 (1787)	[Ya?]hui	Chiu[Chou] Teguang	Xining, GD	Cangwu, GX
52/11 (1787–88)	Tiandihui	Zhang Majiu	Zhangpu, F	Zhangpu, F
54 (1789)	Increase Brothers	Lin Tongge	—	—
55/7 (1790)	Tiandihui	—	—	Zhuluo, T
55/9 (1790)	Tiandihui	Zhang Biao	Zhangzhou, F	Zhanghua, T
56/2 (1791)	Tiandihui	—	—	Nantou, T
57 (1792)	Qingheihui	Su Ye Chen Sulao	Tongan, F	Tongan, F
59/5 (1794)	Small Knife	Zheng Guangcai	Longqi, F	Fengshan, T
60 (1795)	Tiandihui	Chen Guangyuan	Fengshan, T	Fengshan, T
60 (1795)	Tiandihui	Chen Zhuo	Tongan, F	Fengshan, T
Jiaqing				
2 (1797)	Small Knife	—	—	Danshui, T
3 (1798)	Small Knife	—	—	Chiayi, T
5 (1800)	Small Knife	—	—	Chiayi, T
5/4 (1800)	Tiandihui	Qiu Dabin	Yangjiang, GD	Yangjiang
5/12 (1800)	Tiandihui	Chen ?	Tongan, F	Haikang, GD
6 (1801)	Tiandihui	Wu Tao, Li Lingkui	Shaowu, F; Jianning, F	Chongan, F; Chongan, F
6 (1801)	Yin/Yang Pan	Li Lingkui	Jianning, F	Chongan, F
6/2 (1801)	Tiandihui	Chen ?	Tongan, F	Xinning, GD
6/3 (1801)	Double Knife	Wang Guang	Quanzhou, F	Mingqing, F
6/4 (1801)	Tiandihui	Chen Li'nan	Tongan, F	Lu village, GD
6/7 (1801)	Tiandihui	Lin Tianshen	Haikang, GD	Haikang, GD
6/10 (1801)	Tiandihui	Ye Shihao	Xinning, GD	Xinning, GD
6/11 (1801–2)	Small Knife	—	—	Chiayi, T
7 (1802)	Tiandihui	Chen Lanjisi	—	Boluo, GD
7 (1802)	Tiandihui	Wen Dengyuan	—	Yongan, GD
7 (1802)	Ox Head	La Yasheng	—	Yongan, GD
7/2 (1802)	Small Knife	—	—	T
7/4 (1802)	Tiandihui	Chen Bang	Zhangpu, F	Yongding, F

Reign date (Western year)	Society name	Founder or principal member		
		Name	Place of origin	Place of founding
7/4 (1802)	Tiandihui	Chen Yaben, Cai Buyun	Guishan, GD; Zhangpu, F	Guishan, GD
7/4 (1802)	Tiandihui	Zheng Sitao	—	Xinhui, F
7/4 (1802)	Tiandihui	Cai Buyun	Zhangpu, F	Guishan, GD
7/5 (1802)	Heyihui	Zhang Peichang	Xianyou, F	Yongding, F
8/3 (1803)	Tiandihui	Li Dalu	—	Ninghua, F
9 (1804)	Sandianhui	Wang Qing	Shangheng, F	Raoping, GD
10 (1805)	Tiandihui	Yang Jinlang	Pingyuan, GD	Huichang, JX
10/2 (1805)	Increase Brothers	Huang Kaiji	Changting, F	Nanping, F
10/10 (1805)	100 Sons	Huang Zuhong	Xiaoliu, F	Ouning, F
10/10 (1805)	Tiandihui	Li Yugao	JX	Ouning, F
11/3 (1806)	Increase Brothers	Li Wenli, Zheng Xingming	Jinjiang, F; —	Nanping, F; Jianyang, F
11/3 (1806)	Tiandihui	Liao Yuesi	Pingyuan, GD	Huichang, GD
11/6 (1806)	Tiandihui	Liao Yuesi	Pingyuan, GD	Pingyuan, GD
11/6 (1806)	Tiandihui	Lu Shenghai	—	Yongding, F
11/6 (1806)	Tiandihui	Zhou Dabin	Huichang, JX	Wuping, F
11/7 (1806)	Sandianhui	Zhou Dabin	Huichang, JX	Huichang, JX
11/7 (1806)	Tiandihui	Zeng Alan	Yongding, F	Nanping, F
11/7 (1806)	Tiandihui	A Chengyou	Wuping, F	Huichang, JX
11/8 (1806)	Tiandihui	Wu Fuzhen	Longquan, GD	Huichang, JX
11/9 (1806)	Tiandihui	Yang Jinlang	Pingyuan, GD	Heping, GD
12/3 (1807)	Tiandihui	Yang Kaitai	GD	Pingluo, GX
12/3 (1807)	Tiandihui	Li Yuanlong	GD	Pingluo, GX
12/3 (1807)	Tiandihui	Zhou Masheng	Nanhai, GD	Shanglin, GX
12/3 (1807)	Tiandihui	Yang Kaitai	GD	Pingluo, GX
12/5 (1807)	Tiandihui	Yan Chao	Nanhai, GD	Laibin, GX
12/5 (1807)	Tiandihui	Zhou Zongsheng, Li Gui	Nanhai, GD; Xichang, SI	Shanglin, GX
12/8 (1807)	Tiandihui	You De	Shanghang, F	Huichang, JX
12/8 (1807)	Tiandihui	—	—	Xiangwu, GX
13 (1808)	Tiandihui	—	—	Anyuan, JX
13 (1808)	Sanhehui	Yan Guiqiu	Shunde, GD	Shunde, GD
13 (1808)	Baizihui	Jiang Bizai	—	Jianyang, F
13/1 (1808)	Tiandihui	—	—	Laibin, GX
13/2 (1808)	Honglianhui	Zhu Shichong, Liao Shanqing	Anyuan, JX; Yongding, F	Anyuan, JX
13/2 (1808)	Tiandihui	Yan Chao, Yan Yagui	Both Nanhai, GD	Laibin, GX
13/2 (1808)	Tiandihui	Lin Qiongyan	Shixing, GD	Fengyi, GX
13/2 (1808)	Tiandihui	Zhong Yamao, Zhong Hezhao	Both Nanhai, GD	Shanglin, GX
13/2 (1808)	Increase Brothers	Su Xianming	GD	Pingnan, GX
13/3 (1808)	Tiandihui	—	—	Pingluo, GX
13/4 (1808)	Tiandihui	Yan Yagui	Nanhai, GD	Laibin, GX
13/4 (1808)	Tiandihui	—	—	Laibin, GX

Reign date (Western year)	Society name	Founder or principal member		Place of founding
		Name	Place of origin	
13/4 (1808)	Tiandihui	Gu Zhisheng	GD	Teng co., GX
13/4 (1808)	Sandianhui	Que Xiang	Pingyuan, GD	Huichang, JX
13/4 (1808)	Tiandihui	—		Teng co., GX
13/4 (1808)	Tiandihui	Gu Zhisheng	GD	Pingnan, GX
13/5 (1808)	Jianghuquan	Zhu Dehui	Wuping, F	Wuping, F
13/5 (1808)	Tiandihui	—		Shanglin, JX
13/5 (1808)	Tiandihui	—		Laibin, GX
13/7 (1808)	Tiandihui	—		Laibin, GX
13/7 (1808)	Tiandihui	—		Pingnan, GX
13/8 (1808)	Tiandihui	—		Rong co., GX
13/8 (1808)	Tiandihui	Yan Chao	Nanhai, GD	Laibin, GX
13/12 (1809)	Tiandihui	—		Cenqi, GX
15/4 (1810)	Increase Brothers	Gu Zhisheng	GD	Pingnan, GX
15/6 (1810)	Increase Brothers	Li Wenli	Jinjiang, F	Shunchang, F
15/6 (1810)	Increase Brothers	Yao Dagao	Pingyuan, GD	Wuyuan, GX
16 (1811)	Baizihui	Jiang Bizai	—	Jianyang, F
16/8 (1811)	—	Chen Ren	Shanghang, F	Anyuan, JX
16/10 (1811)	Tiandihui	Lin Runcai	Wengyuan, GD	Tilong, GX
16/11 (1811)	Increase Brothers	Huang Shike	F	Yongan, GX
16/11 (1811)	Sanhehui	Yan Guiqiu	Shunde, GD	Shunde, GD
17 (1812)	Increase Brothers	—		Shizong, YN
17/2 (1812)	Tiandihui	Lin Runcai	Wengyuan, GD	Shizong, YN
17/9 (1812)	Increase Brothers	Xie Guoxun	Wuping, F	Wuping, F
18 (1813)	Increase Brothers	—		Baoning, YN
18 (1813)	Increase Brothers	—		Fuquan, GX
18/2 (1813)	Huazihui	Yu Tiancai	Jianning, F	Yazhou, SI
18/3 (1813)	Renyihui	Xiong Mao	Shicheng, JX	Ninghua, F
18/9 (1813)	Renyihui	Xiong Mao	Shicheng, JX	Ninghua, F
18/9 (1813)	?	Huang Delong, Zhang Changme	Liyuang, H; GD	Jianghua, H
18/11 (1813)	Renyi shuang- daohui	Feng Laosan	Nanfeng, JX	Guangze, F
18/12 (1813– 14)	Renyi san- xianhui	Feng Laosan	Nanfeng, JX	Shaowu, F
19 (1814)	Sandianhui	Zhou Dabin	Huichang, JX	Huichang, JX
19 (1814)	Hongqianhui	Jiang Wenxing	Nanfeng, JX	Jianning, F
19 (1814)	Sandianhui	Seng Hongda	Heping, GD	Dingnan, JX
19/2 (1814)	Baixianghui	Cao Huailin	Changting, F	Sha co., F
19/2 (1814)	Renyihui	Chong Hexian	Changting, F	Sha co., F
19/2 (1814)	Renyihui	Huang Kaiji	Changting, F	Shunchang, F
19/2 (1814)	Renyihui	Huang Kaiji	Changting, F	Jianyang, F
19/2 (1814)	Renyihui	Xiong Miao	Shicheng, JX	Ninghua, F

Reign date (Western year)	Society name	Founder or principal member		
		Name	Place of origin	Place of founding
19/2 (1814)	Renyihui	Li Faguang	Wuping, F	Jian'an, F
19/2 (1814)	Increase Brothers	Li Wenli	Jinjiang, F	Jianyang, F
19/2 (1814)	Sandianhui	Seng Hongda	Heping, GD	Dingnan, JX
19/2 (1814)	Increase Brothers	Chen Pulong	Huangtian, F	Jianyang, F
19/2 (1814)	Sandianhui	Wu Yamei	Heping, GD	Dingnan, JX
19/3 (1814)	Sandianhui	Qiu Lizhan	Lianping, GD	Longnan, JX
19/4 (1814)	Liangminhui	—		Nanning, GX
19/5 (1814)	Renyihui	A Ziwang	Guangze, F	Jianyang, F
19/5 (1814)	Renyihui	Li Qingyun	Shanghang, F	Jianyang, F
19/6 (1814)	Renyihui	Rao Techang	Wuping, F	Ouning, F
19/6 (1814)	Fumuhui	Ou Lang	Zhangpu, F	Xiapu, F
19/6 (1814)	Renyihui	Li Qingling	GD	Jianyang, F
19/7 (1814)	Increase Brothers	Xie Luoli	GD	Chongyi, JX
19/8 (1814)	Double Knife	Chen Dongzai	Jianyang, F	Ouning, F
19/8 (1814)	Increase Brothers	Zhong Tigong	Chongyi, JX	Chongyi, JX
20/3 (1815)	Increase Brothers	—		Yong co., GX
20/8 (1815)	Double Knife	Hou Erbaxiong	Xianyou, F	Jianning, F
20/10 (1815)	Zhongyihui	Liang Laosan	Nanhai, GD	Gongcheng, GX
20/10 (1815)	Tiandihui	Su Feng	Lianzhou, GD	Jianghua, H
20/11 (1815)	Increase Brothers	—		Qianjiang, GX
21/2 (1816)	Increase Brothers	Yang Hantou	Qujiang, GD	Wenshan, YN
21/2 (1816)	Increase Brothers	—		Wenshan, YN
21/3 (1816)	Increase Brothers	—		Cangwu, GX
21/5 (1816)	Increase Brothers	Yan Laosan, Mai Qing	Fujian, GD	Xingyi, GZ
21/6 (1816)	Increase Brothers	—		Yong, GX
21/8 (1816)	Xiaoyihui	—		Guzhou, GZ
21/9 (1816)	Bright Lantern	Deng Fangbu	Xiapu, F	Baiheshan
21/11 (1816–17)	Zhongyihui	Liang Laojiu	Foshan, GD	Yongming, H
23/5 (1818)	Tiandihui	Tang Zhi'e	H	Guanyang, GX
23/6 (1818)	Tiandihui	Tang Zhi'e	H	Guanyang, GX
23/10 (1818)	Increase Brothers	Jiang Huakai	Daozhou, H	Daozhou, H
23/12 (1818–19)	—	Tang Zhi'e	H	Guanyang, GX
24/8 (1819)	Double Knife	Dai Xian	Zhangpu, F	Jieyang, GD
25/8 (1820)	Tiandihui	Jiang Yanu	Ouning, F	Jianyang, F

Reign date (Western year)	Society name	Founder or principal member		
		Name	Place of origin	Place of founding
25/10 (1820)	Pingtouhui	Huang Sunnu	Jianyang, F	Jianyang, F
25/10 (1820)	Pingtouhui	Chen Guannu	Xincheng, JX	Jianyang, F
Daoguang				
1/2 (1821)	Pingtouhui	Lao Cao	Nanfeng, JX	Jianyang, F
1/2 (1821)	Laorenhui	—		GX
1/9 (1821)	Pingtouhui	Lao Cao	Nanfeng, JX	Jianyang, F
6/4 (1826)	Xiongdihui	Wu Qiaosan	Jiaying, GD	Taiwan
10 (1830)	Increase	—		Baoning, YN
	Brothers			
11 (1831)	Tiandihui	Ma Shaotang	Kaitai, GZ	Kaitai, GZ
11/1 (1831)	Sanhehui	Wu Laoer	GD	Kaitai, GZ
12 (1832)	Increase	—		Baoning, YN
	Brothers			
13/4 (1833)	Baojiahui	Li Kui	Longquan, GD	Shaowu, F
14/3 (1834)	Baojiahui	Li Kui	Longquan, GD	Shaowu, F
15/4 (1835)	Sandianhui	Zou Siqiaoqun	Longquan, GD	Shaowu, F
15/6 (1835)	Increase	—		Guzhou, GZ
	Brothers			
15/6 (1835)	Bianqianhui	—		Liping, GZ
15/*6 (1835)	Increase	Xu Yugui		Liping, GZ
	Brothers			
15/*6 (1835)	Bianqianhui	—		Liping, GZ
15/8 (1835)	Increase	—		Liping, GZ
	Brothers			
15/8 (1835)	Sandianhui	Li Jiangsi	JX	Shaowu, F
17/9 (1837)	Increase	—		Jenxiong, YN
	Brothers			
20/10 (1840)	Laorenhui	—		Dading, GZ
24 (1844)	Godworshipper	—		Guiping, GX
27 (1847)	Hongqianhui	Li Xianya	JX	Jianyang, F
27 (1847)	Increase	Zhong Tigang	GD	JX
	Brothers			
27/1 (1847)	Guanyehui	Xie Sifeng	Changning, JX	Changning, JX
27/10 (1847)	Tiandihui	—		Pingluo, GX
28 (1848)	Tiandihui	—		Zhen'an, GX
30/6 (1850)	Tiandihui	—		Gui co., GX
30/7 (1850)	Sanhehui	—		Taiping, GX
30/8 (1850)	Sanhehui	—		Longzhou, GX
30/8 (1850)	Small Knife	—		Zhanghua, T
30/11 (1850)	Tiandihui	—		Xinlun, GX

NOTE: F = Fujian, GD = Guangdong, GX = Guangxi, GZ = Guizhou, H = Hunan, JX = Jiangxi, SI = Sichuan, T = Taiwan, YN = Yunnan.

* Denotes an intercalary month.

Appendix D

Concordance for British Museum Documents Published by Xiao Yishan

The Tiandihui documents Xiao Yishan found in the British Museum in the 1930's are now housed in the Oriental Reading Room under the document numbers OR 2339, OR 8207B—8207E, OR 8207G, and OR 8207K. Xiao published the bulk of these documents in juan 1, 2, 5, and 6 of his book *Jindai mimi shehui shiliao*, but he took such liberties with their format and illustrations that it is impossible to follow the complete texts in his book. (In rearranging and changing things as he did, he seems to have continued the tradition of the Chinese copybook in the true sense of the word.) To spare other researchers the trouble of chasing down Xiao's sources, we provide the following list of the documents on file and where they appear in his book.

File and pages of originals in British Museum	Juan and pages in Xiao Yishan	Change from original
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OR 2339

1a—14a	5: 11b—14b	10a—11b omitted
14b—25a	6: 11b—15a	
25a—43b	4: 35b—39a	
44a—b	6: 21b	
45a—b	5: 10a	
46a—97b	4: 15a—24a	
98a—115b (36 oaths)	3: 8a—12b	
116a—121a	3: 13a—14a	
121b	1: 5b	
122a	1: 2	
122b, 123a—125a	—	Omitted pictures
125b	1: 44b	
126a—135a	2: 1b—3a	
135b	1: 25a	
136b—140a	1: 1a—5a	
140b—146b	—	Omitted pictures
147a—154b	5: 1a—3a	
155a—173b	5: 5a—7a	162a—163a omitted
174a—b	6: 15b	
175b—176b	5: 4b—5a	
177a—193a	5: 7a—10a	
194a	—	Omitted
195a—201a	2: 8a—9a	

OR 8207B, part 1

1a—1b	—	Omitted
2a—10a	4: 29b—34b	Some lines omitted
10a—12a (12b blank)	—	Omitted
13a—23b	5: 28a—32a	

OR 8207B, part 2

1a—3a	5: 41a—42b	
3b—6a	6: 3b—6a	
6b—7b	6: 11b—12b	
7b—13b	5: 42b—48a	
14a—16a	6: 18a—20a	
16a—18b	—	Omitted
OR 8207C		
1a	4: 34a	
1b—8b	—	Omitted
9a—13a	4: 34a	
13b—14a	—	Omitted
OR 8207D		
2a—4b	1: 41b—44a	
5a	1: 44a	
5a—15a	2: 3b—7b	
15a—b	—	Omitted
16a—18a	5: 26b—27a	Much text rearranged
19a—25b	1: 1a—5b	24a omitted
26a—28b	—	Omitted
26b	5: 15b	
27a	1: 6a	
29a	1: 8a	
29b-57b	1: 6b-24a	306, 326, 33a, 346, 46b, 47b, 48b, 50b omitted; 51b, 52b, 54b (pictures) omitted
58a-59a	5: 22a-22b	
59b-86a	1: 24b-41a	61a-62b, 75b, 77a, 79b, 80b, 81b omitted; 82b, 83a-84a (pictures) omitted
86b, 87b, 88a-b	—	Omitted
89a-105b	1: 7a-23b	
106a-108b	5: 14b-16a	Additions to original
109a-110b	6: 15b-16b	
110b-116b	5: 16b-19a	

116b-118b	—	Omitted
119a-120b	6: 19b-21a	
120b-125b	5: 19b-22a	
126a	—	Omitted
126b-153b	5: 22b-39b	
153b-154b	5: 40a	
155a-169b	6: 1a-11a	
170a-173a	6: 22a-23b	
OR 8207E, part 1		
1a-b	2: 1a-b	All documents in part 2 of this file concern the Taiping Rebellion and were omitted
2a-9b	3: 4b-7b	
OR 8207E, part 3		
2a-b	4: 12a-b	
3a-21b	4: 24a-29a	
OR 8207G, part 1		
1a-20a	4:1a-11b	Part 2 omitted as duplicate of part 1
OR 8207K		This is a volume of waist certificates and diagrams; only three waist certificates were published, 1: 25b-26b

Appendix E

Tiandihui Oaths

These three English translations are taken from relatively obscure articles. Document 1 is from Newbold and Wilson, “The Chinese Secret Society of the Tien-Ti-Huih,” pp. 137–42. Document 2 is from Gutzlaff, “On the Secret Triad Society of China,” p. 364. Document 3 is from Williams (Hoffman), “Oath Taken by Members of the Triad Society,” pp. 285–87.

Document 1: Newbold and Wilson (1841; all parenthetical glosses are from Newbold and Wilson, pp. 137–39)

1. You must observe the rules (of the society); if you do not, may you die by the bite of a serpent!
2. You must not trust to your own strength and ill-treat a weak brother; he who does presume on his own strength and ill-treat a weak brother, let him die and no one bury him!
3. If brothers, nourished at the same breast, quarrel with brothers of the Hung family, you must help the Hung brethren; if you do not, may you die under 10,000 swords!
4. If a brother come to your house and you have conjee, give him conjee to eat; if you have rice, let him eat rice. Treat him (according to your circumstances); if you do not, may you perish by a great ulcer!
5. If you go into a brother’s house, and the brother have rice, eat rice; if he have (only) conjee, eat conjee, and do not speak disrespectfully (of his poor fare); if you do, then may you die a headless spirit!
6. If a brother be in distress, relieve him; if calamities befall him, support him; if you do not, then may you perish in the great sea!

7. If a brother of the Hung family be gambling, you must not, agreeably to the rules (of the society), gamble at the same place; if you do, may you vomit blood and perish!
8. It is not permitted to speak carelessly about the affairs of the brotherhood, or to divulge the principal matters; he who acts thus disorderly, let him die by a random arrow!
9. (N.B. The ninth oath was left blank in the Chinese copy.)
10. If an aged mother hand down a girdle, you must not, through covetousness, sell it to another person; if you do, may you perish by a rocket (or great gun)!
11. If a brother be poor, you must help him; otherwise may you die on the road!
12. If you do not receive a brother's child, may you die!
13. He who behaves disorderly towards a brother's wife, let him die by divine justice (Tien Kung), or may he be struck by a thunderbolt!
14. If a brother on a journey have business (or be in distress) and you do not help him, may you perish at the bottom of the sea!
15. If a brother be sick and supplicate help; if you do not help him, may you die by divine justice!
16. If a brother be dead and you are earnestly invited to come; if you do not come (to the funeral), may you die at the bottom of the sea!
17. If a brother love wine and is not obedient to the headman, cut off the rim of his ear!
18. If a brother sell opium, and the Kung Sze (headman) be informed of it, cut off both ears!
19. If one brother doubt (the veracity of) another, give him 108 strokes!
20. If a brother die in a foreign country and there is not sufficient money for funeral expenses, whoever does not contribute something to assist, let him die childless!
21. If a brother, in distress, come to the house of another, they must eat and drink together; he who does not assist, let him die midway on his journey!
22. If a brother do not take care of his mother, give him thirty-six strokes of the bamboo!
23. He who commits adultery with a brother's wife, let him be run through with a sword!
24. Brethren should be harmonious and not fight with each other; if they do, give them ninety-six strokes!
25. If a member act meanly and do not respect a brother's word, let him have 108 strokes of the red wood! * (N.B. The twenty-fifth seems a mere repetition of the nineteenth.)
26. If a brother wish to borrow money to send to China, and you do not lend him some, may you die an orphan's death!
27. If a brother when travelling act disorderly, and be not obedient (to his superiors or the rulers), give him thirty-two strokes of the red wood!
28. If a brother be disobedient, after being taught and admonished, give him ninety-six strokes.
29. A member who does not attend a brother's marriage when he has leisure shall receive twelve strokes!
30. If a brother send a letter by another brother, and the latter do not deliver it to his family, may he fall into the water and the fish eat him up!
31. A brother must nourish another brother (in time of need); if you have food, you must share it with him; if you do not, may a tiger devour you!
32. If you come and lodge for a night at an inn kept by a brother, and you do not pay him two cash, when you die may no one receive your corpse!
33. If you have a junk, and a brother be going to another country, you must give him a passage! (N.B. No penalty is annexed to this and the following.)
34. If a brother be disabled in his hands or feet, you must draw out your purse and help him to buy food!
35. If a brother die and have no money to erect a tombstone, each brother must contribute something; he who refuses, let him die solitary!

36. He who mentions these thirty-six oaths of the brotherhood must have two hundred and sixteen strokes of the red wood.[†]

* A heavy wood well known at Malacca.

* Compared with materials unearthed in China of approximately the same vintage, these oaths from the society of Malacca are very complex.

Document 2: Gutzlaff (1846)

I hereby, being perfectly aware of my engagement, join the society, to live with them, like Kwan and Paou, in the communion of goods, and with the same good understanding and harmony as Luy and Chin. In imitation of the heroes of antiquity, I form this connexion, wishing entirely to adopt the principles [of the fraternity]. And I hereby solemnly swear to bind myself for ever to you, with more than parental and fraternal affection, before this altar on which the incense ascends. May we for ever unite in removing malice from amongst us; may we prove true to each other hand and foot, walking together like a pair of wild geese through this sublunary life.

May a lucky star shine on us whilst performing this oath, and our fortune be never on the wane. May a lucky star shed its light upon us.

Document 3: Williams/Hoffman (1849)

Whereas, on account of humanity, justice, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness, of benignity, gentleness, respect, politeness, and condescension, of whatever is low, and whatever is great, in heaven or earth, we combine everywhere to recall the Ming and exterminate the barbarians, cut off the Tsing [Qing], and await the right prince....

As in ancient days, when [Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei] pledged each other in the Peach Garden, making loyalty and faithfulness the foundation, humanity and justice the head, and filial piety and obedience foremost; so now, the whole body of neophytes make these same six virtues the foundation of their oath. From the time of entering the Great Brotherhood, we will help and care for each other as brothers, we will defend and care for each other, and with full strength and firm purpose will support each other to the utmost, as would brothers by the same mother, never caring whether it is our private concern or not.

1. We reverence heaven as our father; 2. earth as our mother; 3. the sun as our brother; 4. and the moon as our sister-in-law; 5. we worship before the altar of the five ancestors; 6. we worship Wan Yun-lung as the founder of our brotherhood; 7. the whole associated body as our righteous brethren; 8. and the whole family of Hung as honored relatives of the same blood....

Our purpose will never alter, and our faithful and patriotic spirit will diffuse pleasure among the whole. Seeing that, in the revolution of heaven (or affairs), there is now a prince in the court who is no prince, and ministers who are no ministers, there must be a determination to restore the Ming.

1. After entering the Great Brotherhood, you swear not to oppose the heavenly relations, nor alter your mind by violating this oath, nor plan any injury against a brother; if you do, may the god of Thunder utterly destroy and exterminate you.

2. After entering, you swear not to clandestinely give or initiate by, or sell the girdle, or coats of the Hung family: if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

3. After entering, you swear not to conduct a spy whereby any brother will be apprehended, having in so doing, a covetous desire to obtain the reward offered [by government]: if you do, may you die by the wound of a snake or the bite of a tiger.

4. After entering, you swear not to debauch a brother's wife, daughter, or sister: if you do, may you perish under the knife.

5. After entering, you swear not to vilify the laws or acts of the Association, nor introduce into the company of the Brotherhood, those who are not members, nor secretly disclose its principles: if you do, may your body be cut in pieces.

6. After entering, you swear, if you are a father, not to reveal the laws of the Brotherhood to your son, if an elder brother, not to tell them to your younger brother, nor to disclose them to your relations or friends:

if you do, may you die under the sword.

7. After entering, you swear you will not oppress the weak by employing the strong, nor the poor by means of the rich, nor the few by the many: if you do, may you die by myriads of knives.

8. After entering, you swear that wherever in the two capitals and the thirteen provinces, a brother, whom you know to be such, shall arrive, you will lodge and feed him, receive him and see him on his journey; if you do not, may you die under the sword.

9. After entering, you swear that whoever of your brethren meets with pressing difficulties, you will faithfully and disinterestedly rescue him; if you do not, may you be cut into myriads of pieces by thousands of swords.

10. After entering, you swear to regard the parents of a brother as your own father or mother, and if a brother place his wife, or deliver his son into your charge, you will regard them as your own sister-in-law or your own nephew: if you do not, may Heaven destroy you.

11. After entering, you swear to make no new enemies, nor remember the old ones: if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

12. After entering, you swear that whenever a brother shall trust you with money or clothes to take to any place for him, you will carry them for him, and not appropriate them to yourself: if you do not, may the god of Thunder utterly destroy and exterminate you.

13. After entering, you swear that whenever you commit any transgression, your own body will endure its retribution, your own life will suffer its penalty, and you will not implicate a brother, nor extort his money: if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

14. After entering, you swear you will devise no scheme to injure a brother, or benefit yourself at his expense: if you do, may you be killed with the sword.

15. After entering, you swear that if you fill the situation of writer or policeman in the government offices, you will faithfully and diligently assist a brother in trouble: if you concoct any artful plans in this position, may the god of Thunder utterly destroy and exterminate you.

16. After entering, you swear not to compel a brother to sell you on credit, or force him to lend you, or rob him on the road; if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

17. After entering, you swear that if you become an officer of government, you will not injure a brother in order to obtain promotion: if you do, may you die by the wound of a snake or by the bite of a tiger.

18. After entering, you swear that should a brother become prosperous, you will not stop him in his path to extort from him: if you do, may you die by the sword.

19. After entering, you swear you will not irregularly take a sister-in-law in the Brotherhood, to wife, contracting the marriage by a gobetween, nor have any illicit intercourse: if you do, may you die under the sword.

20. After entering, you swear you will not, when the brethren become numerous, secretly get them into a gambling-house in order to cheat a brother out of his property: if you do, may the god of Thunder destroy you.

21. After entering, you swear that should you by mistake ignorantly rob a brother of his property, you will restore it to him as soon as you find out that he is a brother: if you do not, may you vomit blood and die.

22. After entering, you swear that if you meet a brother fighting with another man, you shall inquire, and if he is in the right, you shall help him; but if he is not, you shall dissuade him; you will not assist another man and insult a brother: if you do, may the god of Thunder destroy you.

23. After entering, you swear not to avenge your private animosity under pretence of a public wrong, thus covertly scheming to injure a brother: if you do, may you be bitten by a tiger when you ascend a hill, may you drown when you go into the water.

24. After entering, you swear never to requite the favors you receive from a brother by evil acts, nor injure him in your lust of gain and pursuit of wealth: if you do, may the thunder kill or fire destroy you.

25. After entering, you swear that whenever a subscription is raised to relieve a brother who has met with distress, you will not appropriate that money to your own use: if you do, may you be cut in pieces.

26. After entering, you swear that, as each brother has his own share, whenever you borrow of a brother you will repay him, and not avail of a false pretext to cheat him: if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

27. After entering, you swear that you will not give ear to slanderous reports tending to interrupt brotherly feeling: if you do, may you die by the sword.

28. After entering, you swear that if your own brother be fighting with a brother of the Association, you will exhort them to stop, but will not secretly assist your own brother: if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

29. After entering, you swear that whenever you see a brother oppressed or insulted by a person not a member, you will go forward to assist him, and not keep back from fear: if you do not, may the thunder kill, or the fire destroy you.

30. After entering, you swear you will not conduct a diabolical man into a brother's house, or concoct his injury with persons not members: if you do, may you perish by the sword.

31. After entering, you swear that whatever you receive in charge from a brother, you will faithfully and diligently attend to it, and not to defraud or deceive him: if you do, may you perish by the sword.

32. After entering, you swear that, in your intercourse with your brethren, you will not appear to agree with them while you are secretly opposing them: if you do, may you vomit blood and die.

33. After entering, you swear you will not, on returning home, secretly discard your oath: if you thus privately release yourself from it, may you be struck down to Tartarus, and never undergo any transmigration.

34. After entering, you swear to live in harmony with your brethren, mutually receiving and giving assistance: if you do not, may the god of Thunder strike you dead.

35. After entering, you swear to wear mourning three years; and if one is publicly nominated, and the documents and the dresses are delivered to him, then you will acknowledge him as "Incense Lord": if you deceive your brethren, may the god of Thunder destroy you.

36. All you neophytes who have sworn this evening must remain united from first to last, and your faithful and righteous adherence to this oath without reservation will diffuse happiness among the brethren.

Notes

For full authors' names, titles, and publishing data on works cited by bracketed numbers, see the Tiandihui Bibliography, pp. 303–32. The information on the other works will be found in the General Bibliography, pp. 333–38. Unless otherwise stated, memorials bear the dates of their rescription by the emperor. The following abbreviations are used in the Notes:

HDSYJ Huidangshi yanjiu (Research on the history of *huidang*). Shanghai, 1987 (TDH Bibliography item 111).

QSL Da-Qing lichao shilu (The veritable records of the Qing dynasty). Taipei: Hualian, 1964.

TDH Tiandihui. 7 vols. Beijing, 1981-89 (TDH Bibliography item 242).

Introduction

[1](#) The “late imperial period” embraces the four centuries between the 1550’s and the final destruction of the imperial order. For a detailed discussion of the era’s distinctive social, economic, and demographic conditions, see Wakeman, “Introduction”; and Rawski, “Economic and Social Foundations.”

[2](#) For a detailed treatment of Chinese *hui*, see Ownby [185]. For an extended discussion of how “protection” often gave way to “predation” and vice versa, see Perry.

[3](#) Starting in the Kangxi reign, some Qing bureaucrats had the privilege of submitting frank reports about various conditions within their purview directly to the emperor. Although these so-called palace memorials were not always handled in exactly the same way from reign to reign, each routinely received a vermilion rescript from the imperial brush and was returned to its author. After perusing the emperor’s remarks, the memorialist was asked to return the document to Beijing for safekeeping in what ultimately became known as the Grand Council Archive. There copies were made as needed for everyday administrative use. (For more information on the Grand Council, see Bartlett.) The memorial originals are now kept in the Palace Memorial Archive (Gongzhongdang) of the National Palace Museum in Taipei and in the Rescripted Memorial Collection (Zhupi zhouzhe) of the First Historical Archive (FHA) in Beijing. The copies are kept in the FHA’s Grand Council Reference File (Junjichu zouzhe lufu). Happily, most of the relevant memorials from the FHA are now easily accessible, thanks to the seven-volume work *Tiandihui* (cited as *TDH*), compiled under the joint editorship of the Qing History Institute of People’s University and the First Historical Archive.

[4](#) I am not sure to what extent these conditions prevailed. In the documents I read, I did not come across any discussion of false confessions of the sort Philip Kuhn found in his investigations of the “soulstealers.” I found no case, for example, like his Monk Chu-ch’eng, who confessed under torture to every one of the charges against him, although he was innocent on all counts (Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, pp. 16, 186). But the sources certainly show that Qing officials were often sent out on wild goose chases by the erroneous or conflicting testimony of Tiandihui “offenders.” Whether such information was artfully contrived or fuzzily recalled is not clear.

[5](#) Two of the most important, the confessions of Xu Axie and Yan Yan, are translated as docs. 1-3 of App. A.

[6](#) For an example, see doc. 4, App. A, a translation of a palace memorial summarizing the testimony of society members Chen Biao and Monk Xing Yi.

[7](#) Zheng Chenggong, the figure of the Ming-Qing transition whom scholars of the Ming Loyalist persuasion most often associated with the Tiandihui's founding, is discussed in Chap. 4. For his biography, see Hummel, pp. 108-10.

1 • • • Beginnings: The Eighteenth Century

[1](#) Today the Guanyinting (or Gaoxi temple, as it is called) is a part of Dongxia township of Yunxiao county, which was formed in 1798 from portions of Pinghe and Zhangpu counties. For documentary evidence on the founding of the Tiandihui, see nn. 60 and 61, below.

[2](#) The Southeast China macroregion was first described by G. William Skinner. For more on the area, see Skinner, "Presidential Address," p. 277; and Skinner, "Regional Urbanization." The Hokkien, speakers of the Southern Min dialect, were clustered on the seacoast and depended on trade and maritime activities. The Hakka, or "Guest People," a group that began migrating into the higher regions of Fujian and Guangdong during the Song dynasty, spoke a dialect of their own and were primarily engaged in agriculture. For more information on both groups and on the region, see Lamley, "Subethnic Rivalry"; and Lamley, "Lineage and Surname Feuds."

[3](#) Gu Yanwu, *Tianxia junguo libingshu*, juan 93:24, as quoted by Lin Renchuan, p. 170.

[4](#) Hughes, [110].

[5](#) Blussé, p. 247.

[6](#) Rawski, *Agricultural Change*, p. 97.

[7](#) *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[8](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 87.

[9](#) Ng Chin-keong, p. 12. See also Fu Yiling. Many of the dispossessed moved inland into the mountains of western Fujian and northwestern Guangdong, and then over the mountain passes into Jiangxi, southern Anhui, and western Zhejiang (see Averill). These migration patterns are discussed in more detail in Chap. 2.

[10](#) Ng Chin-keong, p. 215. For a discussion of why the commercial prosperity of Zhangzhou was unable to effect a complete economic transformation, see Chang Pin-tsun. Chang's explanation for the rise of Fujian's overseas trade during the late Ming is at odds with the usual ones of push-pull economic, demographic, and market factors. He points out that other provinces faced the same problem of land shortage and population pressure, and argues that what accounted for Fujian's rise and made it unique was the ability of the Fujianese to sustain the maritime legacy of their forefathers even in the hostile environment of the Ming. Yet for all the prosperity this overseas trade brought, Fujian became primarily a service center of shippers, marketers, and distributors, so that much of the profit was in fact siphoned off to the producing regions.

[11](#) Ng Chin-keong, pp. 16-19.

[12](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 14-16; Perkins, pp. 208, 212. According to Perkins, p. 214, Fujian's population grew at a faster rate than the national average between 1786 and 1851, remained flat until 1873, and declined steadily thereafter.

[13](#) Rawski, *Agricultural Change*, p. 71. According to Rawski, this was a period in which market expansion outpaced population growth.

[14](#) Lin Renchuan, p. 164.

[15](#) For a more detailed discussion, see Ownby, [183], pp. 29-58; and Cai Shaoqing, [16], pp. 8-10.

[16](#) Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 9; Lamley, "Subethnic Rivalry," p. 292.

[17](#) Ng Chin-keong, pp. 95-152.

[18](#) J. J. M. De Groot, as cited by Blusse, p. 243. On petty piracy as it operated in Guangdong, see Murray,

pp. 18-31.

[19](#) Blussé, p. 248.

[20](#) The term “Hua” is another name by which the Chinese refer to China and to themselves. “Wai” means outside or beyond. Thus, the literal meaning of the compound is “outside of China.” But since the Chinese traditionally saw their country as the center of civilization, the connotation is “outside of civilization.”

[21](#) Lamley, “Lineage and Surname Feuds,” p. 263. For more on the wokou, see So, pp. 5–7.

[22](#) For more on the Zheng family, see Struve, pp. 79–89, 98, 101, 178–95; Wills; Cheng K’o-cheng; and Blussé.

[23](#) Quoted from Kawaguchi Chōju, by Blussé, p. 256.

[24](#) Blussé, p. 258.

[25](#) Quoted by Cheng K’o-cheng, p. 239.

[26](#) Vermeer, p. 17.

[27](#) Lamley, “Lineage and Surname Feuds,” pp. 263–65. For an extended discussion of the process, see Lamley, “Lineage Feuding.”

[28](#) Lamley, “Lineage and Surname Feuds,” p. 268.

[29](#) Ownby, [183], p. 79.

[30](#) Ibid., p. 59; Zhuang Jifa, [348], pp. 2-6.

[31](#) Zhuang Jifa, [342], p. 4.

[32](#) *Yongzheng gongzhong zhupi zouzhe* (Rescripted palace memorials of the Yongzheng reign), 9: 571–73 (YZ 6/1/8; 1728), as translated by Ownby, [183], p. 71.

[33](#) Xie Jinluan, pp. 102–4, as quoted by Ownby, [183], p. 96. For a biography of Xie Jinluan, see *Qingshi liezhuan*, juan 67: 39a–b.

[34](#) Yao Ying, as cited in Ownby, [183], pp. 109–10.

[35](#) Lamley, “Lineage and Surname Feuds,” p. 269.

[36](#) Lamley, “Subethnic Rivalry,” p. 306.

[37](#) For more on this topic, see Luo Ergang, [161]; and Cai Shaoqing, [16], pp. 10, 15. The relationship between the *Shuibuzhuan* and the Tiandihui is discussed in more detail in Chap. 5.

[38](#) Zhuang Jifa, [353], p. 488.

[39](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], pp. 1–2; Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 109–12; Cai Shaoqing, [16], pp. 61–62.

[40](#) Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 61. Cai obtained his information from the *Da-Qing huidian*, Yongzheng ed. of 1732, juan 209. See also Antony, [2], pp. 294–95.

[41](#) According to both Qin Baoqi and He Zhiqing, this provision of 1667 appears in juan 194 of the Guangxu version of the *Da-Qing huidian*. Qin Baoqi [199], p. in and He Zhiqing [83], p. 248. As further evidence of the hardening of attitudes toward sworn brotherhoods, neither the Ming code nor the first Qing code of 1646, which was largely modeled on it, had any laws against them. Moreover, the laws banning participation in them, formerly classified under the rubric “Miscellaneous Crimes,” were moved into the section on rebellion in 1671 (Antony, [2], pp. 295–96).

[42](#) Ji Qiguang, *Taiwan xianzhi*, as translated by Ownby, [183], p. 211.

[43](#) Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 10; Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 112.

[44](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 3; Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 10.

[45](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 3. For more on the Wu Qiu uprising, see Ownby, [183], p. 223; Sasaki, [217], pp. 214–17; and Lian Heng, [139], pp. 538–39.

[46](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 3; Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 113. For more on the Liu Que uprisings, see Ownby, [183], p. 224; Sasaki, [217], pp. 217–19; Lian Heng, [139], pp. 538–39; and Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 61.

[47](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 4; Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 114. For more on the Zhu Yigui uprising, see Ownby, [183], pp. 224–35; Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 62; Lian Heng, [139], pp. 538–46; Sasaki, [217], pp. 219–32; Xiao Yishan, [284], pp. 493–99; and Meskill, p. 32. See also Dai Xuanzhi, [49].

[48](#) For more on the history of sworn brotherhoods (*jiebai xiongdì*), see Luo Ergang, [161], *HDSYJ* revision, pp. 7–8.

[49](#) Lamley, “Subethnic Rivalry,” pp. 296, 304.

[50](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], pp. 4–5; Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 115; Zhuang Jifa, [354], p. 20; Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 5; Ownby, [183], p. 240.

[51](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 5; Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 115–16. For more information, see Ownby, [183], pp. 240–41; Zhuang Jifa, [353], p. 490; Zhuang Jifa, [354], p. 20; Zhuang Jifa, [347], p. 163; and memorial of Gao Qizuo, YZ 6/4/18, in *Yongzheng zhupi yuzhi* (Rescripted edicts of the Yongzheng reign), 5: 14–15.

[52](#) Zhuang Jifa, [354], pp. 21–22; Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 116.

[53](#) Ownby [183], p. 224; Zhuang Jifa, [354], p. 20. But there were Father-Mother societies in the 18th century whose sole purpose seems to have been mutual aid in times of bereavement.

[54](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 6; memorial of Qing Fu, Guandong gov.-gen., QL 7/8/10, First Historical Archives, Rescripted Memorial Collection (*Zhupi zouze*); QSL, QL 329: 56–57. For a detailed account of their activities, see Ownby, [183], pp. 248–52; and Zhuang Jifa, [347], p. 163. According to Ownby, when the Small Knife Society responded to high grain prices by murdering the Zhangpu county magistrate, at least four society members were found to have belonged to the local brigade. High rice prices impelled Chen Zhuo of Raoping county, Guangdong, to amass a force for an attack on the county granary at Zhaoan. The uprising was planned for Aug. 20, 1742 (QL 7/7/20), but a shortage of numbers caused the group to disband before troops could arrive to arrest them.

[55](#) Ownby, [183], pp. 255–59. In an atmosphere of *xiedou*, the leaders of two brotherhoods agreed to help each other seek revenge on their enemies. After meeting to drink in a local temple, the leaders promised to assist each other in property fights and brawls and had the names of their members inscribed in a book. They next selected the name of their society, drank to form a pact, cut a copper seal, and carried out animal sacrifices. Although they invoked the name of Zheng Chenggong and issued military rank, there was no reference to Ming Restorationism.

[56](#) Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 118; Cai Shaoqing, [16], pp. 5, 16.

[57](#) Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 118; Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 5.

[58](#) Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 7.

[59](#) Ti Xi was a native of Gaoxi township, Zhangpu county, Fujian (now part of Dongxia township, Yunxiao county); and Li Amin was a native of Xiaceng village, Zhangpu (now part of Chendaizhen, in Yunxiao county).

Three documents ascribe the Tiandihui’s founding to Ti Xi. One is the joint memorial of Wula’na, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, and Xu Siceng, gov. of Fujian. This document, written on May 27, 1789, recounts for the emperor the governors’ handling of two Tiandihui offenders, Chen Biao and Xing Yi, and contains the statement: “According to our investigation, Ti Xi founded the Tiandihui in QL 26 [1761]” (see doc. 4, App. A). The others record two remarks of Wang Zhiyi, gov. of Fujian: (1) “We have noted that the

Tiandihui was founded in 1761” (*TDH*, 1: 141, memorial, JQ 4/10/29 [Nov. 26, 1799]); (2) ”We have noted that the Tiandihui of Fujian province was begun in 1761 [QL 26], with Monk Ti Xi as its founder” (Wang Zhiyi, [254], p. 144).

Information on the founding and early development of the Tiandihui comes from the testimony of society members Yang Yong, Chen Biao, and Yan Yan. (The testimony of the last two is summarized in gov.-gen. Wula’na’s memorial.) But imprecision and vagueness characterize most such confessions. This is owing in no small measure to the fact that the Tiandihui did not come to the attention of Qing officials for some 25 or 26 years, by which time most of the founders were dead. Many of those who remained behind to recount its founding were second or third-generation members whose recollections were not always accurate.

Chen Biao mentioned three men, “Li,” “Zhu,” and “Tao,” in association with Monk Wan, alias Hong Er. From his testimony and Yan Yan’s, “Li” has been identified as Li Amin, “Tao” as Tao Yuan, and “Zhu” as Zhu Dingyuan. Hardly anything is known about Zhu Dingyuan. Though Yang Yong stated that Zhu was a lad of 15 or 16 years (*TDH*, 1: 164, memorial of Chang Qing, QL 52/1/20), Yan Yan referred to him as a person of the distant past (doc. 3, App. A). Later Tiandihui documents are pervaded with references to two men—“Zhu” and “Li”—as the organization’s founders. Those who see the society as having been created for the purpose of mutual aid believe that the second reference is to Zhu Dingyuan; those who see Ming restorationism as the purpose believe the reference is to the “Zhu” family that founded the Ming dynasty.

Another possibility, suggested by Barend J. ter Haar, [78], is that the local messianic tradition of the Guangdong-Fujian region, which abounded with tales of saviors by the names of “Li,” from the Han dynasty, and “Zhu” from the Ming dynasty, was incorporated into Tiandihui legend. Ter Haar also suggested that the early phase of Tiandihui development in Sichuan, referred to in the testimony of Yang Yong, Chen Biao, and Yan Yan, was not an actual historical phenomenon so much as the incorporation of myth into history. According to him, Ma Jiulong, the exorcist referred to in the testimony, might be a reference to Ma Chaozhu, a religious proselytizer from Hunan, who, in the name of Zhu Hongjin, prepared an uprising to restore the Ming in 1752, and successfully escaped apprehension by Qing authorities. For more on Ma Chaozhu, see Chap. 2, n. 51.

[60](#) *TDH*, 1: 110—11, testimony of Yan Yan. Both Zhang Polian’gou (“Scarface Dog” Zhang) and Yan Yan mentioned Ti Xi’s sojourn in Guangdong. Zhang is the one who claimed Ti Xi had 40 to 50 followers there. (*TDH*, 1: 104, QL 53/5/23.)

[61](#) For information on the transmission process, see the confessions of Yan Yan and Chen Biao, App. A, docs. 2—4; Fang Daojin and Fan Junda, [59]; and the documents reprinted in *TDH*, 1: 64—152.

[62](#) Now part of Dongxia township, Yunxiao county, just adjacent to the Guanyinting.

[63](#) There is some question about where Chen Biao made his home. According to Chen Pi, he lived in Yunliao township, Heping county, Zhangzhou; according to Yan Yan, he lived in Yunxiao, Zhaoan county. A summary of Chen Pi’s testimony can be found in QSL 1318, QL 53/12/2 (Dec. 28, 1788, pp. 19513—19514), and QSL 1325, QL 54/3/20 (April 15, 1789, p. 19645), reprinted, respectively, in *TDH*, 1: 137, 140.

[64](#) Most of the subsequent recruiting was along surname lines; Cai, Wu, and Huang were among the most numerous of the 332 recruits.

[65](#) Controversy surrounds the date on which “Scarface” became a member of the Tiandihui. By his own testimony, he had joined in the summer of 1781 (QL 46), when Zhao Mingde, Chen Pi, and Chen Dong of Guangdong came to his house to gamble. He claimed he did so because as the owner of an illegal gambling establishment, he would no longer have to fear people causing him trouble. He also mentioned the Gaokeng’an (convent) and Makeng temple as places where Zhao Mingde had transmitted the society. (*TDH*, 1: 103, 104.) Chen Pi, however, claimed that he and Scarface had joined together years before that (QSL 1325, QL 54/3/20, April 15, 1789, p. 19645, in *TDH*, 1: 140). The Tiandihui that Xu Axie joined in 1768 was also said to have been founded in 1767, but it is not known whether the members participated in the uprising (*TDH*, 1: 70—71). Xu Axie’s testimony is translated in App. A.

[66](#) The key source on the Lu Mao uprising is a memorial by Cui Yingjie, gov.-gen. of Zhejiang and Fujian, QL 33/5/22 (July 6, 1768); it is reprinted in both *Lishi dang’an* (History archives), 1986, no. r: 30—34, and *TDH*, 7: 528—33. There is also some information in the joint palace memorial of Wula’ na and Xu Siceng (doc. 4, App. A). See also *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (Gazetteer of Zhangzhou), 47: 42. I am indebted to David Ownby

for the suggestions on why there is no mention of the Tiandihui in the rebels' testimony.

[67](#) For more on the Li Amin affair, see the memorial of Wen Fu, gov. of Fujian, QL 35/1/20, reproduced in both *Lishi dang'an*, 1986, no. 1: 34—36, and *TDH*, 7: 534—40. The document contains the testimony of several of the men who were implicated in the affair. See also App. A, doc. 4.

[68](#) This information was forthcoming from the testimony of his son, Zhao Ling, who also stated that his father was buried at Wushikeng (Black Stone Mound), now part of Heping township (Fang Daojin and Fan Junda, [59], p. 11). Zhao Ling's testimony is summarized in the memorial of Wula'na and Xu Siceng, App. A, doc. 4.

[69](#) App. A, doc. 4.

[70](#) *TDH*, 1: 87, memorial of Sun Shiyi, Liangguang gov.-gen., QL 52/2/27. This memorial can also be found in the National Palace Museum, Taipei: GZD 50273, QL 52/2/27. The following poem was transmitted to Lin Gongyu at the time of his initiation:

The flood waters covered all under Heaven.
Three thousand formed a society with Li, Tao, Hong. [or Li Taohong]
Mu-li-dou-shi will rule the world.
The flood waters unite all into the harmonious universe.

Mu-li-dou-shi is discussed in Chap. 4. It is not clear from the text whether the three characters “Li,” “Tao,” and “Hong” refer to an unidentified individual named Li Taohong (whom ter Haar [78] links to the messianic tradition of south China), or whether the reference is to three individuals with the surnames Li, Tao, and Hong, who might be identified as Li Amin, Tao Yuan, and Monk Hong Er, early historical founders of the Tiandihui. In his confession, Lin Gongyu stated that Lin Sanchang had also mentioned Zhu Hongde, a lad of fifteen or sixteen, who had been conceived by eating an immortal peach (*TDH*, 1: 87).

[71](#) In the first code, the characters *ri* (“day”) and *yue* (“moon”) may be a split character for *ming* (“bright”). Since the Daoist practice of splitting existing characters or making up new ones for ceremonial purposes was widely known, it is possible that the two characters are a hidden reference to the Ming dynasty. If so, this would constitute one of the earliest written references to the Ming in the Tiandihui lexicon.

[72](#) *TDH*, 1: 70—71, testimony of Xu Axie and others.

[73](#) *TDH*, r: 68—72, memorial of Sun Shiyi, Liangguang gov.-gen., QL 52/2/6.

[74](#) Li Zhai recruited Hou Mai, Lin Long, Chen Zhuo, Li Tonggu, and Xu Songgu; Lin Long, in turn, recruited Deng Chang and Liao Pu (*TDH*, 7: 524, memorial of Wula'na, QL 54/5/3).

[75](#) This account is taken from a memorial of Taiwan Brigade-general Chai Daji, QL 51/9/10, *TDH*, 1: 170—75. For a contrasting account, see *TDH*, 5: 265—78, the version given in *Zhanghua xianzhi* (Gazetteer of Zhanghua county). It states that Yang Guangxun and Lin Shuangwen joined the Tiandihui during the same initiation ceremony in 1783. At that time, the inductees swore oaths and drank a mixture of their blood and wine. Lin Shuangwen subsequently invited Lin Pan (in some accounts Lin Han), Lin Ling, and Lin Shuifan to join the society, and as a result, it spread quickly throughout northern Taiwan. In the northern region (*lu*), it subsequently divided into three branches (*fang*): Lin Shuangwen was named “Changfang,” Cai Fu the “Second Fang,” and Ye Sheng the “Third Fang.” Each fang had several hundred members.

The account goes on to say that Yang Guangxun used his affiliation with the Heaven and Earth Society to recruit friends for the showdown with his brother, and that it was only after the trouble had begun and word of it had reached the local authorities, that the society's name was changed to the Increase Brothers Society (*TDH*, 5: 266). For more on the relationship between the two homophonic Tiandihuis—the Heaven and Earth Society and the Increase Brothers Society—see Ownby, [183], pp. 299—309.

[76](#) For a complete account of the Lin Shuangwen rebellion, see *TDH*, 1: 153—432, all of vols. 2—4, and 5: 1—362.

[77](#) As a result, arrests on the mainland began with a vengeance as government officials endeavored to

exterminate the Tiandihui. The first offender to “spill the beans” was Yang Zhenguo, alias Yang Yong, of Taiwan, whose confession was memorialized to the emperor on Feb. 23, 1787 (QL 52/1/6). Yang Yong had originally joined the Leigonghui of Yang Mashi (*TDH*, 1: 171). Together with Yang Xuan, he confessed that the Tiandihui in Taiwan dated from its founding by Yan Yan, and that it had been started in Guangdong by a monk named Hong Erfang and a lad of 15 or 16 named Zhu. He also gave the Fenghua pavilion at Houxi as Monk Hong Erfang’s address. (*TDH*, 1: 64—65.) Much of this proved to be unreliable information and sent Qing officials down false trails for quite some time.

This was true also of the information provided by Scarface Dog Zhang. In custody by September, Scarface was joined there the following spring by Yan Yan, from whom the authorities obtained the names of Monk Wan, Zhao Mingde, Chen Pi, and Chen Biao to add to the growing roster of Tiandihui offenders. The authorities spent several months trying to chase down Zhao Mingde, Chen Biao, and Ti Xi in Guangdong province based on Scarface Dog’s testimony that Zhao Mingde (along with Chen Pi and Chen Dong) resided in Dapu county, Chaozhou prefecture.

Scarface’s testimony was “corrected” several months later by Chen Pi, who revealed that all three of the men lived in Fujian, not Guangdong. (*QSL* 1318, QL 53/12/2, Dec. 28, 1788, p. 19514, in *TDH*, 1: 137.) Unbeknownst to Chen Pi, both Zhao Mingde and Ti Xi were dead by then (in the first and third lunar months of 1799, respectively), but the officials were able to locate their sons, Zhao Ling and Xing Yi, who were immediately taken into custody. (For the testimony of Ti Xi’s son, Xing Yi, see App. A, doc. 4.) In his testimony, Chen Pi denied Yan Yan’s allegation that he had propagated the Tiandihui in Taiwan (*TDH*, 1: 140).

[78](#) Both Huangfeng village and Dingfang village are now part of Huotian township, Yunxiao county.

[79](#) Fang Daojin and Fan Junda, [59], pp. 11—12; Qin Baoqi and Liu Meizhen, [207], p. 159; Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 274—77; (*TDH*, 5: 363—74.

[80](#) *TDH*, 5: 375—402; Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 277—79.

[81](#) For a facsimile of the placard and the poem, see *TDH*, 5: 452.

[82](#) Qin Baoqi and Liu Meizhen, [207], p. 159; Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 282—88 ; *TDH*, 5: 450—82.

[83](#) Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 282—83; *TDH*, 6: 1—10.

[84](#) *TDH*, 6: 11—72; Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 283—87; Qin Baoqi and Liu Meizhen, [207], p. 159.

[85](#) *Da-Qing lili* (genyuan), section on rebellion, juan 45, as cited by Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 278. For an extended discussion of this provision, see Antony, [2], pp. 302—3. The term *fluxing* has led some scholars to argue that what was being “revived” was the Tiandihui of the Kangxi era, not the society organized by Lin Shuangwen (see Luo Ergang, [163], p. 87; and Xiao Yishan, [292], juan 1).

[86](#) According to Qin Baoqi, the Small Knife societies that appeared in Taiwan between 1772 and 1782 had their own distinct initiation ceremonies and customs and were clearly not part of the Tiandihui system. See Qin, [196], pp. 17–20, and [199], pp. 288–93.

[87](#) Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 292—93; (*TDH*, 6: 73—77.

[88](#) For more on Small Knife Society uprisings during the early Jiaqing era, see Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 293—98.

[89](#) Lewis, p. 45.

[90](#) *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[91](#) *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[92](#) For information on the contemporary meaning of sworn brotherhood, see Jordan, especially p. 233, where he explains its advantages over mere friendship: “The purpose of converting friendship into mock kinship is to allow the relationship to become ‘more intimate’ and ‘longer lasting’ than ordinary friendship ... and to provide mutual assistance in case of untoward events in the life of any partner to the alliance.”

[93](#) Schipper, p. 397.

[94](#) Ibid., p. 410.

[95](#) Ibid., p. 413.

[96](#) Historians of the Ming Loyalist school regard the second slogan as evidence that the Tiandihui's founders were affiliated with the Ming dynasty. See n. 59, above.

[97](#) The use of both split characters and finger gestures probably derived from Daoist practices.

[98](#) Yan Yan's second testimony, doc. 3, App. A. Ownby, [183], p. 350, argues that the practice of requiring initiates to pass under crossed swords was invented by Ti Xi and served to differentiate the Tiandihui from all other groups or societies.

[99](#) *TDH*, 5: 383. The Luo sect had a similar initiation ceremony, by the description of Kelley, "Sect and Society," p. 5. Each new member burned incense, kowtowed before a shrine, and acknowledged the sect leader (*laoguan*) as his teacher. Some inductees paid an initiation fee of 200 *cash* as well. For these men, as for Tiandihui followers, membership meant entry into a mutual aid pact.

[100](#) This compilation, prepared by Qin Baoqi, is based on the cases in *TDH*, vols. 6 and 7.

[101](#) Naquin and Rawski, p. 48.

[102](#) Yan Yan's second testimony, doc. 3, App. A.

[103](#) Statistics compiled by Qin Baoqi, based primarily on the cases in *TDH*, vols. 5—7.

[104](#) Ng Chin-keong, p. 102.

[105](#) For an extended discussion of predation as an outgrowth of protection, see Perry, especially pp. 48—95. The term "criminal entrepreneurship" is employed but not precisely defined by Ownby, [183], p. 6.

[106](#) Yan Yan's second testimony, doc. 3, App. A.

[107](#) *TDH*, 6: 136—37, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, Fujian gov., JQ 4/3/9.

[108](#) *TDH*, 6: 139, memorial of Fu Chang, acting gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 4/3/26.

[109](#) Ownby, [184], p. 14.

[110](#) Ownby, [183], p. 23.

[111](#) *TDH*, 7: 534—40, memorial of Wen Fu, Fujian gov., QL 35/2/4.

[112](#) According to Ownby, [185], p. 49, Lin Shuangwen's Tiandihui was a "loosely-connected body of local cells, devoted to self-protection and selfempowerment," but without any of the "pro-Ming, anti-Qing or anti-Manchu statements attributed to the later Triads." Again, according to Ownby, no one, including leaders, "expressed his understanding of the violence in protonationalistic, restorationist terms," and there was "no evidence of restorationist or anti-Manchu intent expressed at any point before, during, or after the Lin Shuangwen uprising" ([184], p. 5). Elsewhere, he states: "Lin Shuangwen provides no evidence of pro-Ming restorationist intent," nor did his rebels "invoke the spirit of the fallen Ming" ([183], pp. 327, 318).

[113](#) It is interesting to note that even the "Ming restorationism" or loyalty of Zheng Chenggong himself is now being called into question. As Qin Baoqi, [194], p. 97, notes, a contemporary observer, the 17th-century scholar Zhang Huangyan, declared that Zheng's aim was not to restore the dynasty. Struve, pp. 116—17, while not directly addressing this question, repeatedly points out how weak Zheng Chenggong's loyalty to the various Southern Ming rulers was and how he was able to flourish precisely because he remained independent of them. And Croizier, pp. 20—23, states: "We cannot even be certain that Ch'engkung's remonstrances with his father about abandoning the Ming cause have not been touched up to dramatize the hero of Confucian loyalty.... If Koxinga never sacrificed the Ming cause, he also never had occasion to sacrifice any of his own power or interests for it. Ultimately Ming loyalism would confer

historical immortality upon him as martyr to principle in a hopeless cause. But if the anti-Manchu cause had not been so hopeless, that same Ming loyalism could have served to advance Koxinga's own political fortunes. More than one new Chinese emperor started out laboring in the cause of a fallen dynasty and ended up founding his own. The question of his devotion to the Ming cause is one of inner motivation and remains basically unanswerable."

[114](#) Yang Guangxun's huibu is reprinted in *TDH*, 1: 80—83.

[115](#) For an example of a nonrebellious, nonseditious order pushed to sedition by government, see Kelley, "Temples and Tribute Fleets." Before the authorities clamped down on the boatmen's organizations in 1768, they were not secret societies at all. Their doctrines were salvationist, were preached openly, and presented no ideological challenge to the regime. These were simply fraternal groups that fostered a sense of community among their members and provided the kind of support and emotional sustenance normally found in kinship groups. The precariousness of the boatmen's livelihood made the formation of such groups inevitable. It was only when the government stepped in to close the boatmen's sutra halls and sell their buildings that the leaders moved onto the junks of the grain fleets and what had begun as fraternal organizations were transformed into secret societies.

2 • • • Spread and Elaboration: The Nineteenth Century

[1](#) Rice measures, with these contents, were standard and necessary parts of Daoist ceremonies involving rites of passage. During my visit to Yunxiao county, Fujian, my host, Fang Daojin, remarked that when people in the area died, the monks or priests who conducted the funeral service used rice measures as receptacles for various funerary items, and speculated that the Tiandihui had merely adopted the custom. Midou also figure in the marriage rituals of Fujian. Morgan, [176], p. 130, describes the grain measure as "a large wooden tub painted red and filled with rice each grain of which is said to represent a society member. The *Tau* is capable of holding a 'peck' which is a common measure for dry commodities such as beans, rice, etc. The 'peck' measure also denotes abundance and the ability of the *Tau* to hold a 'peck' symbolises the countless thousands of loyal brothers in the Hung family. It is of interest to note that a similar type of tub is often used during the religious ceremonies in Taoist temples." The midou portrayed on the altars in pictures of Tiandihui initiation ceremonies are often inscribed with the words "Muyang City" as well. "Muyang City" has special significance to Tiandihui members. According to the Xi Lu Legend, this was a city of the Ming dynasty to which many of the priest-founders took flight. Muyang later became a mythical place to which candidates for Tiandihui membership sojourned during the elaborate initiation ceremonies of the late nineteenth century.

As ter Haar [78], p. 7, has it, the objects placed in the grain measure were symbols of moral attitudes, and the wooden rice measure (mu midou) itself was the "ultimate pun," a palpable abbreviation for one of the oldest and most cryptic of the Tiandihui codes, *mu-li-dou-shi* (the code is discussed in some detail in Chap. 4, below). The mu midou was also a pun on the name Zhu, for according to ter Haar, the combination of "wood" (*mu*) and "bushel" (*dou*) had come to suggest that surname as early as the 9th century.

[2](#) Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 16. Since early times, the three inland prefectures of Shaowu, Yanping, and Jianning had produced enough rice to export to the grain-short coastal region (Ownby, [183], pp. 32-33).

[3](#) Rawski, *Agricultural Change*, pp. 59, 61, 64, 94.

[4](#) At first, huibu consisted merely of membership lists, but in time they came to include the secret "Kaikou buliben; chushou bulisan" slogan, as well as poems, catechisms, initiation procedures, secret gestures, and even the Xi Lu Legend itself.

[5](#) *TDH*, 6: 211—12, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Zhejiang and Fujian, JQ 21/4/8.

[6](#) *TDH*, 6: 194, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Zhejiang and Fujian, JQ 19/11/26.

[7](#) Zhuang Jifa, [354], p. 106; *TDH*, 6: 194, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Zhejiang and Fujian, JQ 19/11/26.

[8](#) *TDH*, 6: 187, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 19/9/18; *TDH*, 6: 215—17, memorial of Wang Shaolan, Fujian gov., JQ 20/3/28.

[9](#) Lamley, “Subethnic Rivalry,” p. 284.

[10](#) *TDH*, 6: 158—60, memorial of Yu De, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ/intercalary 2/16.

[11](#) Personal communication, Qin Baoqi, Oct. 1989.

[12](#) *TDH*, 6: 179—82, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 17/6/14.

[13](#) *TDH*, 6: 203—5, memorial of Grand Secretary Dong Gao, JQ 20/7/3.

[14](#) *TDH*, 6: 193—94, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Zhejiang and Fujian, JQ 19/11/26.

[15](#) Grand Council *yuezhebao* 52909, memorial of Lu Yinpu, acting secretary of the Board of Punishment, JQ 22/9/7, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [348], p. 15.

[16](#) GZD 17614, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, as cited in *ibid*.

[17](#) *TDH*, 6: 183, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 19/4/1.

[18](#) *TDH*, 6: 187, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 19/9/18.

[19](#) *TDH*, 6: 215—17, memorial of Wang Shaolan, Fujian gov., JQ 20/3/28.

[20](#) The suspiciously wide gap of 31 years has been checked against the dates in the original document (*TDH*, 6: 224).

[21](#) The label “even-headed commoners” derived from the ancient distinction between officials, who wore tall hats, and commoners, who simply bound their hair atop their heads (personal communication, Qin Baoqi, Oct. 1989).

[22](#) *TDH*, 6: 223—27, memorial of Qing Bao, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, DG 2/7/14.

[23](#) *TDH*, 6: 192, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 19/10/12.

[24](#) *TDH*, 6: 188—89, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Zhejiang and Fujian, JQ 19/9/18.

[25](#) , Zhuang Jifa, [354], pp. 106—7.

[26](#) *TDH*, 6: 192, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 19/9/12..

[27](#) Grand Council *yuezhebao* 82042, DG 28/5/12, memorial of Xu Jishe, Fujian gov., as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 16.

[28](#) One of the more elaborate *huatie*, dating from 1811 or before, is reproduced in *TDH*, 6: 340.

[29](#) Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 16.

[30](#) Lu Shenghai’s *Tiandihui* had been in existence since 1797 at least; so had his practice of bestowing cloth *huatie* to his students (*TDH*, 6: 344—49, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 17/2/23).

[31](#) *TDH*, 6: 300—306, especially p. 301, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 11/12/16.

[32](#) For more on the recruiting activities of Zeng Alan, see GZD 13357, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 14/2/17, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 18; and *TDH*, 6: 308—9, memorial of Jin Guangti, Jiangxi gov., JQ 14/3/2.

[33](#) For more on Yang Jinlang, see *TDH*, 6: 318—21, memorial of Yuan Chengzhi, Jiangxi gov., JQ 14/9/16; and GZD 14115, memorial of Xian Fu, JQ 14/5/4, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], pp. 24—25.

[34](#) For more on Liao Yuesi, see *TDH*, 6: 318—21, especially p. 319, memorial of Yuan Chengzhi, Jiangxi gov., JQ 14/9/6; and *TDH*, 6: 328—30, memorial of Chen Yu, Jiangxi minister (*shizhengshi*), JQ 17/11/4.

[35](#) For more on Zhu Shicong, see *TDH*, 6: 325—27, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 17/3/2.

[36](#) *TDH*, 6: 313—14, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 14/8/28.

[37](#) For more on the societies of these borderland regions, see *TDH*, 6: 322—39.

[38](#) “Shed people” were migrants who customarily built small huts to live in as they cleared the hillsides for agriculture (Averill, p. 85). The movement that saw Hakka and non-Hakka alike migrating from Fujian and Guangdong into the Yangzi highlands occurred primarily during the late Ming and early Qing (*ibid.*, p. 88). Many made seasonal journeys back and forth through the mountains and were eager participants in religious sects, bandit gangs, and *xiedou* activities.

[39](#) Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 24.

[40](#) *TDH*, 6: 231—32, memorial of Cheng Zhuluo, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, DG 15/11/17; Grand Council *yuezhebao* 71468, Lufu memorial of Deng Tingzhen, Liangguang gov.-gen., DG 16/5/17, as cited by Zhuang Jifa, [349], pp. 23—24.

[41](#) Grand Council *yuezhebao* 82041, memorial of Xu Jishe, Jiangxi gov., DG 28/3/28, as summarized in Zhuang Jifa, [354], pp. 103—4.

[42](#) Averill, p. 110. That practices from the vegetarian sects, particularly the Luo-jiao or Laoguan-zhai, influenced the Tiandihui should come as no surprise. Such sects had been active in Fujian since at least the Ming-Qing transition, and the Luo-jiao had been the source of an uprising in Jianning prefecture in 1748. For an extended discussion of that uprising and the locations of the sects, see Ownby, “Brotherhoods, Secret Societies, and Ming Restorationism: The Emergence of the Hui in Eighteenth-Century Southeast China,” manuscript of lecture delivered at Harvard University, Dec. 5, 1988, pp. 32—38.

[43](#) *TDH*, 6: 250—52, 265—67, testimony of Ning Jin’ao, JQ 9/1/14.

[44](#) *TDH*, 6: 244—49, especially p. 246, memorial of Yu De, gov.-gen. of Fujian and Zhejiang, JQ 8/8/8. (Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 137, discusses Li Lingkui’s initial effort, but the source he cites in n. 1, a memorial of Qin Cheng’en, Jiangxi gov., JQ 8/11/26, is incorrect.)

[45](#) The announcement was made in 1803, which meant that the next real *zichou* year was not until 1817. Perhaps this was an error on his part or perhaps he was ignorant of the calendrical cycle, because it seems doubtful that Li Lingkui would have been planning an insurrection 14 years in advance.

[46](#) Information on the death of Li Lingkui and the subsequent uprising of Liao Ganzhou can be found in *TDH*, 6: 252—54, 259—63, 276—78, memorials of Qin Cheng’en, Jiangxi gov., JQ 8/11/7, 8/12/8, 9/4/16; and Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 307—8. For a complete account of the Li Lingkui case, see *TDH*, 6: 244—99.

[47](#) For more on Wu Yizuo, see *TDH*, 6: 289.

[48](#) We will see how an individual named Zhu Hongzhu figures in Tiandihui legend in Chap. 5. Despite the linking of “Zhu” to the red bamboo growing beside his village, the character “Hong” in his name is the one meaning “vast,” not “red” (*TDH*, 6: 282).

[49](#) *TDH*, 6: 282—84, testimony of Wu Wenchun, JQ 11/8/4.

[50](#) *TDH*, 6: 357—60, memorial of Pai Ling, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 21/3/15. See also Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 146. Some of the characters Li Laowu used resembled those first used by Chen Fanglao in Quanzhou.

[51](#) Ma Chaozhu was active between 1747 and 1752, when many of his followers were arrested. In his preaching, he spoke of a young ruler and descendant of the Ming house, Zhu Hongjin, who would come with a large army to conquer China and restore the Ming dynasty. Ma Chaozhu described himself as one of Zhu Hongjin’s generals. He deployed the typical paraphernalia of a cult leader, including a mirror, a sword, flags, umbrellas, and fans. For more information, see ter Haar, [78], p. 18.

[52](#) *TDH*, 6: 353—55, memorial of Ruan Yuan, Jiangxi gov., JQ 20/3/10.

[53](#) Zhuang Jifa, [354], pp. 109—10.

[54](#) Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 20.

[55](#) *TDH*, 6: 425, memorial of Ji Qing, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 6/11/5. “Tianyun” was a designation for dates frequently adopted by Tiandihui members. The huatie of Chen Jichuan, for example, mentioned “Tianyun 1” (*TDH*, 6: 341). Similarly, Chen Zhouquan’s announcement of rebellion in 1795 bore the date “Tianyun yimao” (1795, or QL 60, was an yimao year by stem-branch reckoning; a photo of the announcement appears on the first page of *TDH*, vol. 6). According to ter Haar, [78], p. 15, the term frequently appears in Daoist scriptures to denote the beginning of a new kalpa after apocalyptic disasters had destroyed the old one. It also refers to the period of rule allotted to a dynasty by Heaven.

Interestingly, in what may be further evidence of connections between piracy and secret societies, “Tianyun yichou” was the reign title and date used in the articles of confederation drawn up by the seven major pirate leaders of Guangdong in 1805 (1805 was an yichou year in the stem-branch system). For more information, see Murray, pp. 57—59.

[56](#) *TDH*, 6: 424—26, memorial of Ji Qing, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 6/11/5.

[57](#) *GZD* 9325, memorial of Ji Qing, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 7/9/28, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 17.

[58](#) *TDH*, 6: 420—21, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, Fujian gov., JQ 5/7/26. Zhu Hongzhu is discussed in Chap. 5, below.

[59](#) *TDH*, 6: 416—19, memorial of Ji Qing, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 5/7/1; *TDH*, 6: 420—21, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, Fujian gov., JQ 5/7/26.

[60](#) *TDH*, 6: 421—24, memorial of Grand Secretary Dong Gao, JQ 6/5/13.

[61](#) *GZD* 9325, memorial of Ji Qing, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 7/9/28, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 17.

[62](#) *Ibid.*

[63](#) Qin Baoqi [199], pp. 301—2, based on the memorials of Liangguang gov.-gen. Ji Qing, JQ 7/8/29, and Grand Secretary Nayancheng, JQ 7/12/1 (*TDH* 7: 3—5, 82—83, respectively).

[64](#) Qin Baoqi, [199], pp. 302—6. Nayancheng was ordered to Guangdong to investigate gov.-gen. Ji Qing’s handling of the affair. He reached Canton on December 18, four days after Ji Qing had committed suicide by swallowing a snuff bottle. Nayancheng promptly took over as acting governor, arrested the rebels, and settled the case within two months (Hummel, p. 584). For a complete account of these uprisings, see *TDH*, 7: 1—158.

[65](#) Murray, p. 90.

[66](#) *QSL*, 97: 19, JQ 7/4/18.

[67](#) *TDH*, 6: 428, memorial of Nayancheng, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 10/7/6. Wushi Er was one of the leading members of a pirate confederation led by Zheng Yi. For details, see Murray, chaps. 4 and 8.

[68](#) *TDH*, 6: 490—91, memorial of Nayancheng, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 10/6/28.

[69](#) *TDH*, 6: 496—500, memorial of Jiang Youxian, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 17/5/26.

[70](#) *TDH*, 6: 518, memorial of Huguang Censor Feng Zanzun, DG 11/5/4.

[71](#) Vol. 7 of *TDH* contains 86 documents that deal with the Tiandihui in Guangxi. In only 22 of the 57 cases they cover was there no mention at all of the participation or involvement of outsiders.

[72](#) *GZD* 10004, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 13/2/18, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 28 (in his n. 72, Zhuang mistakenly identifies En Chang as the gov. of Fujian). For a full account of the Li Gui affair, see *TDH*, 7: 201—7.

[73](#) *GZD* 12455, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 13/11/13, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 28; *TDH*, 7: 330—32, memorial of Cheng Lin, Guangxi gov., JQ 17/4/7.

[74](#) The six are named in *TDH*, 7: 231, 260.

[75](#) *TDH*, 7: 207—9, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 13/12/25 (a copy of the “Peach Garden Song” is reproduced on p. 214); GZD 13320, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 14/2/13, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 29. See also *TDH*, 7: 231—32, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 14/3/17. Although Hong Qisheng never actually led a rebellion, he was deified by society members in Guizhou province.

[76](#) For references to the use of huibu in Guangxi societies, see *TDH*, 7: 258, 261, 296, 306, 328, 346, 364, 393, and 415.

[77](#) *TDH*, 7: 296—99, memorial of Cheng Lin, Guangxi gov., JQ 16/6/12. Yao Dagao’s huibu is printed in *TDH*, 1: 3—32. For an interesting but unrelated case, in which adversaries altered the huibu of Liang Dayou by adding rebellious words and extra names to the original membership list, see *TDH*, 7: 197, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 12/9/8.

[78](#) *TDH*, 7: 333, memorial of Cheng Lin, Guangxi gov., JQ 17/5/8.

[79](#) GZD 12134, memorial of En Chang, Guangxi gov., JQ 13/10/4, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 29.

[80](#) *TDH*, 7: 368—69, memorial of Ba Habu, Hunan gov., JQ 22/5/14. See also GZD 48464, JQ 22/6/24.

[81](#) *TDH*, 7: 372—73, memorial of Qing Zupei, expectant academician of the Grand Secretariat, JQ 25/7/14.

[82](#) *TDH*, 7: 316. Tang Mingsan belonged to one of the few Tiandihui units that included a member (or former member) of the gentry. It called itself the Longhuahui and had as its elder brother a dismissed *shengyuan* named Lin Chongsan. For a complete account, see *TDH*, 7: 310—26.

[83](#) GZD 2726, memorial of Ruan Yuan, DG 1/2/2, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 27.

[84](#) *TDH*, 7: 438—41, memorial of Chen Yu, Hunan gov., JQ 19/2/23; Zhuang Jifa, [344], p. 165.

[85](#) Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 152. For a full account of the activities of Liu Donggui and Su Feng, see *TDH*, 7: 456—58, 469—76.

[86](#) *TDH*, 7: 480—81, memorial of Wu Bangqing, Hunan gov., JQ 24/9/3.

[87](#) *TDH*, 7: 427—28, memorial of Bo Ling, Yun-Gui gov.-gen., JQ 17/ 10/29. For the entire story, see also 7: 430—34.

[88](#) Grand Council *yuezbebao* 48381, Lufu memorial of Pai Ling, Yun-Gui gov.-gen., JQ 21/6/27, as cited in Zhuang Jifa, [349], p. 31; *TDH*, 7: 444—48, memorial of Bo Ling, Yun-Gui gov. gen., JQ 21/7/10.

[89](#) For more on the Yunnan societies, see *TDH*, 7: 469—514 passim. See also Qin Baoqi, [199], p. 150.

[90](#) For more on Huang Jiaojing, see *TDH*, 7: 454—55, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, Fujian gov., JQ 21/10/25.

[91](#) *TDH*, 7: 448—53, especially p. 450, memorial of Wen Ning, Guizhou gov., JQ 21/9/13.

[92](#) *TDH*, 7: 483—90, memorial of Gao Pu, Guizhou gov., DG 11/9/4. See also pp. 491—92, 499—502.

[93](#) *TDH*, 7: 515—22, memorial of Yu Tai, Guizhou gov., DG 16/1/24.

[94](#) Cai Shaoqing, [16], pp. 19, 20, 63.

[95](#) The oath may be found in *TDH*, 1: 161.

[96](#) The register, reproduced in *TDH*, 1: 80—83, dates from 1786.

[97](#) Qin Baoqi points out that the White Lotus movement was also adopting Ming restorationism as part of its appeal at about the same time. One of the battle cries of White Lotus groups during the Jiaqing era was “Xing-Han mie-Man” (Restore the Han and smother the Man). Another, repeatedly invoked on the eve of rebellion, was “Milefo jiangsheng, baofu Niu Ba” (The Maitreya Buddha has descended; protect cow, eight).

The last phrase means “protect the Ming”; combining the strokes of the characters for “cow” and “eight” yields the character Zhu, the surname of the Ming dynasty. (Personal communication, Qin Baoqi, Oct. 1989.) According to ter Haar, [78], prophecies circulating in 1794 foretold the advent of the Maitreya Buddha to help a certain Niu Ba (or Zhu) start an enterprise.

[98](#) *TDH*, 6: 344—48, memorial of Xian Fu, Jiangxi gov., JQ 17/2/23. Lu San was a native of Yongding, Fujian, who encountered fellow resident Huang Huazeng during the seventh lunar month of 1797. Huang told him that he had joined the Increase Brothers Society, which was also known as the Sandianhui, and had taken Lu Shenghai as his teacher. Huang then invited Lu San to join a society he was founding so that he could use his membership to “swindle” money from others. Lu San agreed and was initiated. Thereupon, Huang Huazeng presented him with a red cloth huatie. During the third lunar month of 1811 Lu San moved to Longquan, Jiangxi, where he had a hard time earning a living. To help make ends meet, he conceived the idea of forming a society and earning money (*TDH*, 6: 332, 336, 345, 346).

[99](#) *TDH*, 6: 318—21, memorial of Yuan Chengzhi, Jiangxi gov., JQ 14/9/16.

[100](#) For a reproduction of Zhou Dabin’s huatie, see *TDH*, photo preface to vol. 6.

[101](#) Liu Meizhan’s huatie can be found in *TDH*, 6: 304—5.

[102](#) *TDH*, 6: 305—6.

[103](#) This huatie, reproduced in *TDH*, 6: 340—41, bears the additional date “Tianyun *xin*-month, *wei*-day.” That this huatie bore resemblance to the one received by Lu San from Huang Huazeng should come as no surprise because Chen Jichuan was a disciple of Lu San. Chen was from Shanghang, Fujian, and ran a store in Longquan, Jiangxi. During the third lunar month of 1811, Lu San moved to Longquan and founded his first society, which Chen joined. The next month Li Kuisheng ran into Chen Jichuan and agreed to take Chen as his teacher by entering his society on June 1, 1811 (JQ 16/4/27) (*TDH*, 6: 332, 336, 345, 346).

[104](#) That is, “huifu Mingzuo.” Shangyudang, JQ 5/7/1.

[105](#) That is, “Fu-Ming Wanxing yiben; hegui Hongzong tongna; shanhe gongxiang sheji; yichao jiuji; wangu mingyang.” *TDH*, 6: 425, memorial of Ji Qing, Liangguang gov.-gen., JQ 6/11/5.

[106](#) Grand Council Reference File, First Historical Archives, banners captured from Chen Lanjisi; *TDH*, 1: 69, testimony of Xu Axie.

[107](#) *TDH*, 7: 350—54, song of Yin Zhiping.

[108](#) *TDH*, 7: 214.

[109](#) *TDH*, 7: 328, memorial of Cheng Lin, Guangxi gov., JQ 16/12/30.

[110](#) *TDH*, 1: 3—31.

[111](#) *TDH*, 1: 5, 8.

[112](#) See, for example, *TDH*, 7: 306.

[113](#) Hsu Wen-hsiung, [95], p. 97, comments: “Although the society’s [Tiandihui’s] avowed political goal was believed to be ‘oppose the Qing and restore the Ming,’ only its 1853 revolt ever raised this slogan. The sworn brotherhoods and secret societies, after all, were not political groups originally attempting to seize power.” Even a mid-19th-century observer questioned the viability of the Tiandihui’s “Fan-Qing fu-Ming” motives and quoted from Charles Gützlaff’s *Life of Taou-kwang* as follows: “The Tien-tee Hwuy, or Triad Society, to appear patriotic, would still talk about the usurpation of the Manchoos, and incite the people to shake off the yoke. These efforts, however, were very feeble, the plans badly concerted, and amongst all their political professions, there lurked always a strong desire to rob; vagabonds like these, therefore, were very soon put down, and the government recovered its ascendancy.” (Wylie, [282], p. 3.)

3 • • • The Tiandihui in Western Historiography

[1](#) Chesneaux, [34], p. 3. For discussions of the various typologies applied to Chinese societies by Western scholars, see Simmel; Deraul; MacKenzie; Roberts; and Fong. Though organizations like the Tiandihui, aside from their initiation rituals, do not seem to have been all that secret, the term “secret societies” has become too well established in the Western literature to drop at this stage.

[2](#) For more on the Freemasons, see Billington, pp. 86—123; and Gayot.

[3](#) For details, see Lyman, [168], pp. 82—84.

[4](#) Ibid., pp. 84—85. Additional problems arose for Freemasons in Europe and America, who discovered that in creating their own mythical history, they had inadvertently provided an avenue of legitimation for Chinese secret societies in the West. Those organizations, which were often engaged in drug smuggling and prostitution, began calling themselves “Chinese Freemasons” and demanding the rights and privileges of their Western counterparts.

Although Masonic writers agreed on the similarity of the symbols and rituals of the two orders, they were unwilling to concede any common origin. One of the first to disavow the Triads, in the late nineteenth century, was Herbert Giles (see Giles [71] and [72]). By the 1920’s, the common origins theory had been thoroughly repudiated on the grounds that Triad ritual contained no references to the building of King Solomon’s temple, a key item in Masonic ritual; that the interpretation put to the shared elements of the two orders differed; and that the Triads were essentially a political organization devoted to the defense of China against foreign invasion.

[5](#) Lyman, [168], p. 105.

[6](#) Ibid., p. 93.

[7](#) Milne, [174], p. 241. According to Milne, the society was known as the Tiandihui until the Jiaqing era; it had assumed the name Sanhehui or “Triad” after the persecutions of 1803, in the aftermath of the uprisings in Boluo, Guishan, and Yongan counties.

[8](#) Ibid., pp. 249—50.

[9](#) Ibid., p. 241.

[10](#) Milne’s account was read posthumously at the 1825 meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society and was subsequently published in the society’s *Transactions*.

[11](#) Williams, [275], p. 281.

[12](#) Newbold and Wilson, [179], pp. 136, 142.

[13](#) Ibid., pp. 156, 157.

[14](#) Ibid., pp. 131, 134.

[15](#) Gützlaff, [77], p. 366.

[16](#) Ibid., pp. 364, 367.

[17](#) Ibid., p. 367.

[18](#) Williams, [275], p. 281.

[19](#) Wylie, [282], p. 8.

[20](#) Ibid., p. 2.

[21](#) Ibid., p. 3.

[22](#) Schlegel, [218], p. i.

[23](#) Ibid., p. xxxvii.

[24](#) Ibid., pp. 1, 2.

[25](#) Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

[26](#) Pickering, [190], p. 64.

[27](#) Ibid., p. 65.

[28](#) Ibid.

[29](#) Ibid., p. 66.

[30](#) Stanton, [225], Preface.

[31](#) Ibid., pp. 1—8.

[32](#) Ibid., p. 9.

[33](#) Ibid., p. 8. Wu Sangui was one of the “Three Feudatories” who were rewarded with territory for their service to the Manchus in the mid-1640’s. The imperial decision in 1674 to abolish these land grants provoked the “San Fan,” or Three Feudatories Rebellion, which lasted for eight years and seriously challenged the fledgling Qing government. For details, see Hummel, pp. 877—80; and Spence, pp. 31, 35—39.

[34](#) Stanton, [225], p. 9.

[35](#) Ibid., p. 10.

[36](#) Ibid., p. 24.

[37](#) Ibid., p. 25.

[38](#) Ibid., p. 42.

[39](#) Ibid., pp. 42—66.

[40](#) Ward and Stirling, [257], I: xii.

[41](#) Ibid., 2: i, 3: i.

[42](#) Morgan, [176], p. x.

[43](#) Ibid., pp. xiii, 95.

[44](#) Ibid., p. xvii.

[45](#) Ibid., p. 19.

[46](#) Ibid., p. 16.

[47](#) Ibid., pp. xviii, 105.

[48](#) Chesneaux, [34], p. 2.

[49](#) Glick and Hong, [73], p. vii.

[50](#) Laai, [121], pp. 212—19.

[51](#) Ibid., p. 240.

[52](#) Skinner, *Chinese Society*; Skinner, *Leadership*.

[53](#) Skinner, “Market Town,” p. 37.

[54](#) Freedman, *Lineage Organization*, p. 121.

[55](#) *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[56](#) Freedman, *Chinese Lineage*, p. 95.

[57](#) For extended discussions of the Annales approach, see Stoianovich; and Hunt, Introduction.

[58](#) Chesneaux, [34], p. x.

[59](#) Functionalists claim that the absence of written records in their particular field of study forces them to freeze their society in a moment of time, whereas structuralists see the structures of society as reducible to a basic universal model and reject any suggestion that this model may have changed in time as naive evolutionism (Davis, [52], p. 153).

[60](#) *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[61](#) Tao Chengzhang, [234]. Tao's thesis is discussed in detail in Chap. 4.

[62](#) Davis, [52], pp. 115, 144.

[63](#) *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[64](#) *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[65](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 74—78.

[66](#) *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[67](#) *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[68](#) Chesneaux, [32], p. 16.

[69](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 36.

[70](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 30, 57.

[71](#) *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[72](#) *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[73](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 110.

[74](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 137—39.

[75](#) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[76](#) *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[77](#) *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[78](#) *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[79](#) Jerome Chen, [23], p. 14.

[80](#) *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[81](#) Chesneaux, [34], p. 21.

[82](#) Wakeman, [246], pp. 117—25. In these few pages, Wakeman clearly acknowledged the disparity between the real history of the Tiandihui and the legendary account. He also provided good discussions of the importance of Ming restorationism as the society's ideological core and the significance of the initiation ceremony. Because of the society's discovery in conjunction with the Lin Shuangwen uprising, Wakeman

was under the impression that it was founded in Taiwan and spread to the mainland.

[83](#) Wakeman, [245], P. 44.

[84](#) Ibid., p. 35.

[85](#) Ibid., pp. 46—47.

[86](#) Boris Novikov, “The Anti-Manchu Propaganda of the Triads, ca. 1800— 1860,” in Chesneaux, [34], p. 50.

[87](#) Ibid., p. 53.

[88](#) Ibid., pp. 54—55.

[89](#) Curwen, [40], p. 76.

[90](#) Hsieh, [93], p. 146.

[91](#) Kuhn, *Rebellion*, p. 171.

[92](#) Ibid., pp. 166—75. Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guofan founded the regional Anhui and Hunan armies that get most of the credit for suppressing the Taiping Rebellion. For their biographies, see Hummel, pp. 464—71, 751—55.

[93](#) Kuhn, *Rebellion*, p. 179.

[94](#) Wright, p. 46.

[95](#) Rankin, “Revolutionary Movement,” pp. 319—61; Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, pp. 128—39, 150—57.

[96](#) See Schiffrin, pp. 214—54; and Esherick, pp. 58—65.

[97](#) Faure, [60], pp. 3—34.

[98](#) Hsu, [94], p. 150.

[99](#) Hsu, [95], p. 96.

[100](#) Ibid., p. 97.

4 • • • The Tiandihui in Chinese Historiography

[1](#) The first Qing officials heard of the Tiandihui was through the testimony of Yang Yong, also known as Yang Zhenguo, a native of Zhangpu county, Fujian, who had moved to Taiwan, become acquainted with Lin Shuangwen, and received the title “deputy generalissimo” (*fu yuanshuai*) during the uprising. His testimony appears in *TDH*, 1: 64—65.

[2](#) Tao Zhengchang, [234], P. 99.

[3](#) Stanton, [225], p. 25.

[4](#) Feng Ziyong, [67], p. 39; Schiffrin, p. 332.

[5](#) For information on Sun Yat-sen’s membership in the Zhigongtang (also known in the U.S. as the Chinese Masons), see Teng Ssu-yu, [237]; Borokh, [7]; Lust, [167]; and Schiffrin, *passim*. According to Schiffrin, when Sun’s maternal uncle Yang Wenna suggested that he become a Triad in order to ease his way into the larger Chinese communities in the U.S., he joined the society in Honolulu. Schiffrin provides a detailed account of how members of secret societies such as the Triads and Gelaohui worked with the Xingzhonghui (Revive China Society) and of how such other early reformers and revolutionaries as Chen Shaobai, Liang Qichao, and Kang Youwei also joined the Triads (pp. 173—77, 186, 226). Schiffrin also shows how Triad

organizational forms were incorporated into the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui). According to him, Sun felt that because degree-holders and officers were incapable of revolution, priority should be given to transforming Tiandihui affiliates into revolutionary vehicles. The idea was that, as a Triad specialist, he would then be the natural leader of the uprising, whereas he would have had to yield to the students' leadership if the New Army became the center of the revolution (pp. 348—49, 350, 358).

[6](#) Chen Xulu, pp. 279—96; Lin Zengping, [144]; Sun Jian, 1: 231—54.

[7](#) Liu Kuiyi, p. 277; Ding Wenjiang, p. 246. See Teng Ssu-yu, [241], p. 81, translating Tao Chengzhang, [234], p. 99: "The San ho hui (Three Convergence Society) or San-tien hui (Three Dots Society or the Triads), Ko-lao hui (Elder Brother Society) and various other societies are ramifications of the Heaven and Earth Society." For more on the various theories about the Gelaohui's origins, see C.-Y. Liu, chap. 2, pp. 8—49. See also Cai Shaoqing, [17], pp. 48—78.

[8](#) Wei Jianyu, "Introduction" to *HDSYJ*, p. 1. Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, p. 139, confirms this impression for Zhejiang: "If a revolutionary party had existed in the province, they [the revolutionary students] might have joined it directly, but secret societies were still the only institution available to organize against the government."

[9](#) Describing his endeavors to drum up enthusiasm for revolution among the Chinese immigrants in America, Sun wrote: "Although I spared no effort in this propaganda, the people to whom it was directed remained apathetic and little responsive to the ideas of the Chinese revolution.... In America the 'Hung-men' Societies naturally lost their political colour and became benefit clubs. Many members of the 'Hung-men' societies did not rightly understand the meaning and exact aims which their society pursued. When I approached them, during my stay in America, and asked them why did they want to overthrow the Ch'ing dynasty and restore the Ming dynasty, very many were not able to give me any positive reply." (*Memories of a Chinese Revolutionary*, pp. 164—66, as quoted in Chesneaux, [32], pp. 145—46.)

[10](#) Tao Chengzhang, [236], p. 25. In commenting on the nature of society participation in the 1911 revolution, Mary Wright acknowledges secret societies as "the only organizations seemingly in a position to lead a popular revolution of disaffected elements from the lower strata," and recognizes them as organizations that in earlier times had provided "some of the motive power in small uprisings and major rebellions," as well as "a network of mutual assistance functions over vast areas of China." But she also points out the revolutionary parties' lack of success in forging a "united front" with them and suggests that "the organization of the societies into local units without strong central control may have been one of the factors which prevented their use in mobilizing a national revolutionary force. Further, many of the societies had elaborate rituals dating back many generations and quite unrelated to the realities of a revolutionary situation." For Wright, "the role of the secret societies is one of the least understood problems in the early Chinese revolutionary movement. Until we have solid understanding of it, we lack an essential key to relating this period backward to the cycles of Chinese rebellions and forward into the later phases of the revolution." (*China in Revolution*, pp. 46—47.)

For more on the gulf between secret societies and the gentry leaders of the revolution, see Esherick, pp. 32—33. On the specific alliances formed by the revolutionaries (especially Tao Chengzhang) and the secret societies in Zhejiang, see Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, pp. 128—31; on the alliance between Huang Xing and the society leader Ma Fuyi in Hunan, see Esherick, pp. 51, 58, 63; on Bi Yongnian's efforts in central China between 1898 and 1899, see Esherick, pp. 24—29, and Schiffrin, pp. 171, 175—78; and on Sun Yat-sen's efforts in Canton, see Schiffrin, pp. 61, 68.

[11](#) Wen Xiongfei, [267], p. 233.

[12](#) Tao Chengzhang (b. 1878), a native of Shaoxing, studied military science briefly in Japan during late 1902 and early 1903. In late 1903, he returned to Zhejiang to organize secret societies as a revolutionary force. Between 1904 and 1909, he spent some of his time in China, trying to unite the Gelaohui in Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Anhui provinces to form the Dragon Flower Society, and the rest of the time working as a history teacher and editor in Singapore, Java, and Burma. He was shot and killed under mysterious circumstances in a hospital in the French Concession of Shanghai in January 1912. Though never definitively proved, Chiang Kai-shek was probably responsible for his death. (Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, pp. 148—57.) Tao's surviving writings were assembled and published in 1986 (see Tao, [235]).

¹³ Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, p. 130. For more information, see Rankin, “Revolutionary Movement,” pp. 336—40.

¹⁴ This way of writing the two characters has also been remarked on by Lian Heng, Zhou Yibai, and Jean Chesneaux.

¹⁵ Tao Chengzhang was also one of the first to point out that the Hongmen groups were inspired by the sworn brotherhoods of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi) and *Water Margin* (Shuihuzhuan). As in those novels, Hong League members treated one another as equals and addressed each other as brothers. But their lodges remained largely unconnected (Teng Ssu-yu, [241], pp. 94—95).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 81. Tao spoke of a brief alliance between the White Lotus and the Tiandihui during the Yongzheng reign and attributed the subsequent split to “the difference in psychological makeup between the people in the south and those in the north” (p. 91). He concluded his essay with an evaluation of the jiao and hui as potential revolutionary allies. Cooperation with the jiao was difficult, he said, but was easily accomplished with the hui owing to their more expansive nature. On the other hand, hui members had less revolutionary discipline than members of the jiao (p. 97).

¹⁸ Today Chinese scholars seem to use the terms *huidang* and *mimi shehui* almost interchangeably in their discussions of the Tiandihui. See, for example, the titles of two recently published books—*Huidangshi yanjiu*, [111], and Cao Shaoqing, *Zhongguo mimi shehui*, [17]. Zhuang Jifa even mixes the terms. See, for example, his articles “Qingdai mimi huidang de tantao” [347] and “Qingdai Huguang diqu de renkou liudong yu mimi huidang de fazhan” [344].

¹⁹ Teng Ssu-yu, [241], pp. 87, 88 (originally published in Xiao Yishan, [272], juan 2 supplement: 4b—5). Teng Ssu-yu’s translation reads as follows: “Near the end of the Ming dynasty the patriotic armies of Chekiang and Fukien were allies and the Hung League first spread from Fukien to Chekiang. The natives of Chekiang promulgated it widely in Kiangsu and Kiangsi. In the middle of the bogus reign of K’ang-hsi [ca. 1700] a Chang Nien-i (also known as Monk I-nien) led a rebellion using Ta-lan-shan, a mountain in eastern Chekiang, as his base. He formed an alliance with secret society members in the mountain, T’ien-mu-shan, in western Chekiang and in the lake region of T’ai-hu, as well as with the remnants of a certain Ko and Ch’en in Lake P’oyang. Unfortunately Chang’s attempt was abortive, and he failed to achieve his purpose. Thereupon K’ang-hsi applied all his despotic power to suppress the members of the Heaven and Earth Society, leaving hardly a trace of its members in Chekiang, Kiangsu, and Kiangsi. Strangely enough, its adherents in Fukien were said to have been unknown to the Manchu government. The Hung League in Fukien then changed the direction of its development by fleeing to Kwangtung. In order to avoid the suspicion of the Manchus, the title Heaven and Earth Society was no longer used there. Instead they took the three dots from the character Hung and styled themselves the San-tien [i.e., the Triad].” In this account, Tao Chengzhang incorrectly asserted that Zhang Nianyi and Monk Yinian were the same person and thereby set the stage for other scholars such as Xiao Yishan to follow suit. In fact, they were two different men. Zhang Nianyi (also known as Zhang Junyu) of Cheng county, Zhejiang, formed an association with his younger brother, Zhang Nianer (also known as Zhang Junjin), Shi Eryuan, and 27 others. In the Banshan temple of Cheng county, they swore brotherhood and adopted “Zhuan taizi” as the name of their uprising in 1707. Although Shi Eryuan, pursued by Qing troops, fled to Dalan Mountain in the Siming range and there continued the resistance, Zhang Nianyi and the others were arrested in Suzhou. (Qin Baoqi, [197], pp. 3—4; Hummel, p. 552.) Monk Yinian, who also led an uprising in 1707 (on the 26th of the eleventh month), had formed a brotherhood at Taicang, Jiangsu. His surname was Cao. (Qin Baoqi, [197], p. 4.) Tao Chengzhang’s article also contains several assertions about the Tiandihui and its relationship to the White Lotus that subsequent scholarship has proved unfounded. By his account, at the time of the Taiping Rebellion, all of the rebel generals were brothers of the Hong League. When it looked to them as though defeat was imminent, the society brothers of Fujian and Jiangxi sent members to infiltrate the Hunan Army and entice the soldiers to join their association. But wanting to avoid the names Three Dots Society and Triad, they adopted Gelaohui, or “Elder Brothers Society,” because the society leaders had been referred to as “elder brothers.” According to Tao, the Sandianhui, the Sanhehui, and the Gelaohui, as well as the Qing Bang (Green Gang) and the Jianghutuan (River and Lake Wanderers Union), all derived from the Tiandihui, which had been called the Hongmen. (Teng Ssu-yu, [241], pp. 88—89.)

In his comments at the end of the translation, Teng Ssu-yu describes Tao Chengzhang as “a revolutionary

activist with enthusiasm for utilizing the underworld forces [but also an individual who] had no time to document his statements, except for an occasional explanation or presentation of a different version in parenthesis” (p. 98). Teng Ssu-yu also takes issue with Tao’s north-south division between jiao and hui as too simplistic and rigid, pointing out that in Ming times the White Lotus Sect prevailed in South China, and many hui could be found in the north (pp. 99—100).

[20](#) Preface to Hirayama Shū, [88], pp. 1—2.

[21](#) Sun Yat-sen, [227], pp. 171—72. For more on the literati’s disintegrating spirit of resistance, see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 2: 1074—75: by 1661, all serious thought of loyalist resistance to the Qing had nearly dissipated, and Ming Loyalism as a political cause had fallen into the hands of charlatans and poseurs. For his account of the activities of Ming Loyalists in the post-1660 period, see pp. 1074—1127.

[22](#) Sun Yat-sen, [228], p. 645 (Price, pp. 57—64).

[23](#) Schiffrin, p. 171. For his account of the interaction between Sun Yat-sen and Hirayama Shū in Tokyo, see pp. 146—48. Hirayama Shū had been sent to China by the Foreign Affairs Ministry in February 1896 to investigate the movements of the secret societies and revolutionary parties. He was a close friend of Bi Yongnian, the head of the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society), and while in China, collected many documents, which he later published.

[24](#) Luo Ergang, review of Hirayama Shū, *Zhongguo mimi shehuishi*, in *Dagongbao*, Feb. 28, 1935; reprinted in Wei Jianyu, [262], p. 2. New criticism of Hirayama’s book has been raised by Barend ter Haar, who charges that a substantial part of it was plagiarized from William Stanton’s Triad Society. For more details, see ter Haar, “The Gathering of Brothers and Elders (Ko-lao hui): A New View,” in Leonard Blussé and Harriet Zurndorfer, eds., *Conflict and Accommodation in Early Modern East Asia—Essays in Honour of Erik Zürcher* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, forthcoming).

[25](#) Hirayama Shū, [88], p. 12. For a translation of the chapters on the White Lotus, the Tiandihui, and the Sanhehui, see Hutson, [113], part 3. Hirayama also provided a very brief survey of the various society-inspired rebellions, beginning with the Lin Shuangwen uprising in Taiwan and ending with the Triad Society’s absorption into the Guomindang, the chief element of the Nationalist Party. Still, he conceded that as the society spread overseas, its aims had become not merely anti-dynastic, but included aiding sick members and seeing that the bodies of the deceased were returned to their ancestral homes. Society members also provided funerals for destitute nationals and did their best to secure the release of any member convicted of a crime.

[26](#) Lian Heng, [139], pp. 546, 570, 571.

[27](#) Feng Ziyou, [67], p. 37.

[28](#) The authors, however, find little difference between the speculations of earlier scholars and Wen Xiongfei’s inferences. Both amounted to little more than educated guessing.

[29](#) Wen Xiongfei, [266], p. 107. His full discussion of the Xi Lu Legend can be found on pp. 106—10.

[30](#) Ibid., pp. 108—9.

[31](#) Mao Yiheng, [172], p. 171.

[32](#) Xiao Yishan, [291], p. 10b. The discussion in which he corrects Wen Xiongfei’s “mistakes” is found on pp. 11—15. On Tao’s mistaking Zhang Nianyi for Monk Yinian, see n. 19, above.

[33](#) Ibid., p. 12b.

[34](#) Luo Ergang, [161], pp. 85—89.

[35](#) Ibid., pp. 85—86.

[36](#) The full provision reads as follows:

The leaders of all those of different surnames who have taken blood oaths to form brotherhoods and plot

rebellion, but whose rebellions have not yet broken out, [shall be punished] by strangulation after the autumn assizes. The punishment for the followers will be reduced by one degree.

If, however, the number of followers is greater than 20, the leaders shall be punished by immediate strangulation, and their followers banished to such far distant places as Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangdong, and Guangxi and put into the army.

If the number of those who joined brotherhoods but did not participate in the swearing of blood oaths is greater than 40, then the leaders shall be strangled after the assizes, and the punishment for their followers reduced by one degree.

If youths aspire to and obtain leadership [in such brotherhoods], this is a severe crime; they are to be strangled immediately, and their followers banished to such malarial districts as Guizhou, Guangdong, and Guangxi and forced to become soldiers.

If the followers [participants] in such brotherhoods not swearing a blood oath number between 20 and 40, the leaders shall be given 100 strokes of the bamboo and banished [*liu*] 3,000 *li*.

If the number of followers in such brotherhoods is fewer than 20, then the leaders should receive 100 strokes of the bamboo and be sentenced to the wearing of the cangue for two months. The punishment for their followers should be reduced by one degree.

[37](#) Nor was there any such provision in the first *Da-Qing huidian*, dating from 1646.

[38](#) The provision can also be found in the *Qinding da-Qing huidian shili*, 779: 13a—b (p. 14980).

[39](#) Luo Ergang, [161], p. 87. However, archival sources show that the newly added section “*fixing Tiandihui*” of 1792 was formulated in response to the attempts of Zhang Biao and Xie Zhi to revive the Tiandihui of Lin Shuangwen and thus had nothing at all to do with an organization dating from 1674 (Qin Baoqi, [194], p. 95, [199], p. 278). According to Qin, the statute appears in the *Da-Qing lüli (genyuan)*, juan 45 (for an English translation, see Chap. 1).

[40](#) Luo Ergang, [161], pp. 77—85.

[41](#) Society manuals were often referred to as “copybooks” because they were hand-copied in whole or in part as they were passed along from member to member. The possession of a copybook was often a requisite “authorization” for someone to found a society of his own. In the course of copying, the manuals’ contents were often significantly altered, either intentionally or unintentionally.

[42](#) Xiao Yishan, [292], 2: 1a—10b. Xiao Yishan published the entire contents of most of the copybooks from which these four documents were drawn. But instead of reproducing them intact, he integrated bits and pieces at will, so that it is almost impossible to follow through a single item or copybook. As an aid to other researchers, we have included a concordance as App. D.

[43](#) Luo Ergang, [163], pp. 1—40 (copybook from Gui county’s Xiuzhi ju), and pp. 41—60 (copybook from Shouxian ge).

[44](#) Luo Ergang, [164], p. 14; Zhong Zhenwei, [332], p. 17; Philip Ho, [89], p. 146. See also Wakeman, [246], pp. 139—42.

[45](#) Luo Xianglin, [165].

[46](#) Xiao Yishan, [292], pp. 1b—2a. Xiao then launched into a lengthy disquisition on the name, nature, and creed of the association, which according to him was referred to as the Tiandihui outside of China and the Hongmen inside. He also maintained that Sanhehui and Sandianhui were alternate names, and that such other organizations as the Shuangdaohui (Double Knife Society), the Xiaodaohui (Small Knife Society), and the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society) were all Tiandihui branches or derivatives. Xiao contended that the society’s founding creed was “Fan-Qing fu-Ming,” and after presenting several theories on the origin of the term Hong, he ultimately accepted the view put forth by Sun Yat-sen and Tao Changzheng, to wit, that it derived from the reign title of the first Ming emperor, Hongwu. Echoing Tao Changzheng, Xiao Yishan also stated his belief in a fundamental difference between the White Lotus groups, which ultimately became the Boxers, and the Tiandihui, which ultimately became the Gemingdang, or Revolutionary Party ([291], pp. 2b—6b).

[47](#) Luo Ergang, [163], p. 40.

[48](#) For example, the Narration says: “In the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign [KX 53, or 1714], the Xi Lu king ordered the great general Peng Longtian to lead his troops to invade China. The local officials were not able to defeat them.” Similarly, in the Preface we find: “In the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign [1714], the Xi Lu invaded the borders and seized the country. Everyday life in all its forms was disrupted by the war.”

[49](#) Xiao Yishan, [291], pp. 15b—16a. Xiao also incorrectly assumed that the copybooks he discovered predated those discovered by Luo Ergang and thus took the date Kangxi 13 (1674) in the Gui County and Shouxian manuscripts as a copyist’s error (pp. 6a—b).

[50](#) The following discussion is based on *ibid.*, pp. 8b—15a.

[51](#) See also, on this point, Dai Xuanzhi, [49].

[52](#) Xiao Yishan, [291], pp. 14—14b, 16.

[53](#) Luo Ergang, [163], p. 2.

[54](#) Philip Ho, [89], p. 134, who lists as examples Wei Juxian, [264]; Liu Lianke, [149]; and Dai Weiguang, [44].

[55](#) Zhou Yibai, [334]. Zhou Yibai’s dates are 1900—1977. For his biography, see *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui kexue xuezhe dacidian*, p. 584. For an account of the rattan-shield soldiers’ participation in the Yakesa campaign, see Liu Xianting, p. 84. See also Weng Tongwen, [268], p. 5 (manuscript).

[56](#) Zhou Yibai, [334], pp. 46—50. Of Zhou Yibai’s hypothesis, Weng Tongwen states: “This theory . . . tries to explain the story of the Hsi-lu [Xi Lu Legend] and the monks of Shao-lin in connection with the origin of the Tiandihui but disregards the central figure Wan Yun-lung, the founder” ([268], p. 5, manuscript).

[57](#) Wei Juxian, [264], as described by Huang Yuzhai, [104], p. 74, which is in turn based on Xiao Yishan, [291], *Fangong* revision, 176: 9649. Xiao cited the piece as an article but did not specify the journal or compilation in which it appeared. According to Philip Ho, [89], p. 146, however, it is a 1946 book, which has “failed us greatly”: “Like all other books on secret societies published in the thirties and forties, it confuses us with legends as histories, with fantasies as facts, and with myths as realities. They have to be used with great care” (p. 134).

[58](#) Wu Weishi, [279], as summarized in Wan Zhongliang, [247], pp. 85—86. By that account, the documents Wu Weishi found in the Palace Archive stated that the Russians attacked Yakesa in Heilongjiang in 1650 as the first step toward a conquest of China, and that only after the suppression of the Three Feudatories revolt in 1682, when the Qing sent troops to Heilongjiang, did the government discover that the Russians had been living there a long time in a wooden city (*mucheng*). When the Qing generals were unable to defeat them, the Kangxi Emperor then turned to the remnants of Zheng Chenggong’s troops who had surrendered to the Qing on Taiwan, that is, to the 500 rattan-shield soldiers. And by the account Wu found in the *Qingshigao*, Peng Chun was sent to Heilongjiang in the first month of 1684 to supervise military affairs and ordered Lin Xingzhu to deploy the rattan-shield soldiers. In the fifth month, the combined forces were able to subdue the Russians.

[59](#) Zhang Tan, [316].

[60](#) Wang Zhongmin, [255], as described by Cai Shaoqing, [16], p. 48.

[61](#) See Feng Ziyou, [67], p. 37.

[62](#) Xiao Yishan, [291], *Fangong* revision, 173: 9546.

[63](#) *Ibid.*, p. 9648.

[64](#) Jiang Junzhang, [115], part 6, p. 23. This article is also cited in Huang Yuzhai, [105], pp. 18, 31. Jiang died sometime in the 1980’s.

[65](#) Weng Tongwen, [268], pp. 9—10 (manuscript). There is little doubt that Zhang Yao, Guo Yi, and Cai Lu were real people, but the story of their Wan brotherhood and its contacts with Zheng Chenggong is taken

from a dubious source, the *Taiwan waiji*. (For mentions of the brotherhood, see Jiang Risheng, pp. 93, 101, 148—49, 161.) Of this so-called “Unofficial History of Taiwan,” which dates from 1704 and purports to chronicle Zheng Chenggong’s activities from the founding of his government to his grandson’s surrender to the Qing authorities in 1683, Crozier, p. 7, observes: “The *Taiwan wai chi* in fact is a prime source for the mythologizing of Koxinga’s life.... It is a Chinese historical romance [where] oral tradition, including miraculous elements, and invented dialogues were included along with events that are verifiable historic fact.... Thus, although *Taiwan wai chi* is the longest, most detailed, and most colorful early account of Koxinga’s life and times, it is unreliable when it cannot be checked against other independent sources.” Clearly, any theory that depends on this work as a primary source should be regarded with great skepticism.

[66](#) Guo Tingyi, [75], pp. 117—20.

[67](#) Xiao Yishan, [284], pp. 902.—3.

[68](#) Jiang Junzhang, [115], part 6, p. 23. See also Jiang Rishen, p. 305, for the account of Chen Yonghua on which Jiang Junzhang’s opinion is based.

[69](#) For biographical information on Guo Yisheng (b. 1927), see *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui kexue xuezhe dacidian*, p. 793.

[70](#) Guo Yisheng, [76], p. 7.

[71](#) Ibid., pp. 8—11.

[72](#) Dai Yi, [51], pp. 42—43. For biographical information on Dai (b. 1926), see *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui kexue xuezhe dacidian*, p. 817.

[73](#) Dai Yi, [51], pp. 42-43.

[74](#) Wang Tianjiang, [251].

[75](#) Rong Mengyuan, [214].

[76](#) Wei Jianyu, [258]. For more information on Wei (1909—88), see *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui kexue xuezhe dacidian*, p. 818 (the date of death there, 1998, is plainly a typo).

[77](#) Yuan Dingzhong, [308].

[78](#) Cai Shaoqing, [II], p. 60.

[79](#) *TDH*, 1: 111—12.

[80](#) Wang Zhiyi, [254], p. 144.

[81](#) Cai Shaoqing, [11], pp. 59—60.

[82](#) Memorial of Fukang’an, dated QL 53/4/14, in *Taiwan wenxian congkan* no. 102, ed. Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1960, juan 58.

[83](#) Dai Xuanzhi, [46], pp. 2—3, citing QSL, juan 1325, QL 54/3/20 (April 15, 1789), p. 19645.

[84](#) Ibid., p. 3. According to Dai Xuanzhi, the name should be read “T’i-hsi” (Ti Xi in pinyin). Xiao Yishan, [292], 1: 5, renders it as “T’e-hsi” (Te Xi).

[85](#) Dai Xuanzhi, [46], as translated in Suleski, [226], p. 416.

[86](#) Dai Xuanzhi, [46], pp. 2—4. Dai based his opinion on the governor’s summary of Xu Axie’s testimony in the QSL, juan 1271. Xu’s full testimony has since come to light; see *TDH*, 1: 70—72.

[87](#) Translation of Suleski, [226], p. 417. At this late date, it is probably impossible to ascertain when the phrase *mu-li-dou-shi* entered the Tiandihui lexicon. We find it first in the testimony of society members

arrested in 1787, including Lin Gongyu, Lai A'en, and Xu Axie, whose initiations (in 1786) were discussed in Chap. i. For Xu Axie's explanation of the term, see App. A, doc. i. See also Chap. 2., n. 1.

The meaning of "shi" is especially problematic. One of the first to speculate on the character was Hirayama Shū, who suggested that it could be interpreted as two 30's or 60 and referred to QL 60 (1795), the last year of the Qianlong reign, after which the Qing were to have been expelled. But Hirayama could not know at the time he wrote that documents would turn up indicating that the slogan was in use at least as early as 1786, which is to say, in the midst of a reign whose end was not in sight. For a refutation of Hirayama Shu's ideas and information on *mu-li-dou-shi*, see Cai Shaoqing, [16], pp. 55—56. Weng Tongwen, [273], suggests that Dai Xuanzhi's interpretation of the slogan cannot be used to prove that the Tiandihui was created in 1767 for the following reasons (not all of which have a direct bearing on the interpretation itself):

1. One cannot rely solely on official documents as evidence for the founding of the Tiandihui because these documents show only when the Tiandihui first came to the attention of government officials. It so happened that this was during the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion, but if there had been no rebellion, Ti Xi would have escaped the notice of government officials completely, and we would have no record of his activities.
2. Those arrested were only a minority of the total Tiandihui membership, and we cannot base our discovery of its founding date on the remarks of the minority.
3. Even Qing officials themselves at the time of their inquiries obtained differing reports on when the Tiandihui was founded. As early as the Kangxi era, there were laws prohibiting the formation of multi-surname brotherhoods, and even though we do not know that they were specifically directed against the Tiandihui, they were directed against groups that had the same purpose. Whether or not the Qing law of 1764 prohibiting the formation of *huidang* in Fujian was specifically aimed at the Tiandihui, the society was certainly one of the main organizations that gave rise to it.
4. The fact that the "Wan as surname" brotherhoods were a Ming and not a Qing phenomenon should give further pause to the belief that the Tiandihui was created during the Qianlong era.
5. If *mu-li-dou-shi* is a slogan of Ming resistance against the Qing, there is no point in trying to link its component parts to imperial reign periods. "Dou," for example, could be regarded as either 12 or 20 (two 10's), but since the Yongzheng reign lasted 13 years, neither rendering works. Similarly, "shi" could be construed as 31, 32, 33, or 60 years, so that it is impossible to be sure of its actual meaning.

Approaching the phrase from the perspective of millenarianism, ter Haar, [78], sees the literal translation as "When 'wood (*mu*) stands' and it is the age of the bushel (*dou*), [somebody] will rule the all under Heaven."

[88](#) Dai Xuanzhi used the confessions (or summaries) of Yang Yong and Yan Yan, as well society rhymes and couplets, to make this connection. But to do so, he had to assume that both Yang and Yan, in testifying that the society was founded at the Fenghua pavilion at Houxi, had mistaken the sound of "Gao" as "Hou." He also had to assume that the Fenghua pavilion was a reference to the Honghua pavilion, which according to him "was another name for the Kuan-yin Pavilion used so that the government officials would not know the actual name of the society's place of founding." (Suleski, [226], pp. 418—19; Dai Xuanzhi, [46], P. 5.)

[89](#) Some of the National Palace Archives were opened to the public in 1965, but they were not made fully available until the early 1970's. Likewise, Cai Shaoqing did not have full access to the First Historical Archives in the mid-1960's.

[90](#) Zhuang Jifa, [346].

[91](#) Zhuang Jifa, [355].

[92](#) Zhuang Jifa, [353].

[93](#) Zhuang Jifa, [354], p. 4.

[94](#) Zhuang Jifa, [338].

[95](#) Zhuang Jifa, [347].

[96](#) Zhuang Jifa, [348], [350].

[97](#) For more information on Qin Baoqi, see *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui kexue xuezhe dacidian*, p. 785.

[98](#) Qin Baoqi, [194], [200], [205].

[99](#) Qin Baoqi, [195].

[100](#) The memorial, first published in *Lishi dang'an*, 1986, no. 1: 37—39, appears in *TDH*, 7: 522—27. The relevant sections are translated as doc. 4, App. A.

[101](#) *Tiben* of Wang Zhiyi, gov. of Fujian, JQ 4/3/9, in *TDH*, 6: 136.

[102](#) App. A, doc. 4. The following quotation is from the same document.

[103](#) Even without access to Wula'na's palace memorial, Dai Xuanzhi had reached a similar conclusion: "Based on my own research, I would like to suggest a further interpretation. The surname Hung refers, I believe, to the Monk Hung Erh. Since he was the founder of the Society, those who joined it in effect became his disciples (*men-t'u*). Therefore the Society was sometimes called the *Hung-men*, meaning Disciples of the Monk Hung. In order to honor their founder, members of the Society symbolically adopted the surname Hung. Moreover, the membership register of the Society was called the *Chieh-Wan wei-chi* ("Recorded because we are bound to the Monk Wan"), which was also a reference to the founder, who was ... sometimes also known as the Monk Wan." (Suleski, [2.26], p. 421, translating Dai Xuanzhi, [46], pp. 6—7).

[104](#) *TDH*, 7: 522—27.

[105](#) Qin Baoqi, [195], pp. 95—111.

[106](#) Weng Tongwen, [268], p. 2 (manuscript).

[107](#) Fei Haiji, [65]. For a refutation of many of Fei's ideas, see Li Shuangqing, [133].

[108](#) Hu Zhusheng, [97], pp. 68—69.

[109](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 69—70.

[110](#) *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[111](#) *Ibid.*

[112](#) He Zhiqing, [83], pp. 244—45.

[113](#) *Ibid.*, p. 269.

[114](#) App. A, doc. 2.

[115](#) Zhang Xingbo, [319], pp. 1042—43. Like so many of his counterparts, Zhang Xingbo seems to have discovered a group that was clearly anti-Qing and concluded that it must have been connected to the Tiandihui.

[116](#) See He Zhengqing and Wu Yannan, [79]; Luo Baoshan, [157]; and Chen Xulu, [28].

[117](#) Luo Ergang, [161], *HDSYJ* revision.

[118](#) This keynote address distilled two of Cai Shaoqing's recent works: *Zhongguo jindai huidangshi yanjiu* (1987) and "Lun jindai Zhongguo huidang de shehui genyuan ..." (1988).

[119](#) The copybook, discovered in the home of Yang Zaijiang, Wang Xiyuan's maternal uncle, mentions an ancestor of the Daoguang era, Yang Guangfu. The genealogy of the Yang family runs as follows: Yang Zhengbang, Yang Tongsheng, Yang Guangfu, Yang Changju, Yang Shengkui, Yang Xiuqi, and Yang Zaijiang (Wang Xiyuan, [252], pp. 14—16).

[120](#) The authors learned of the temple's existence in 1987 and visited it on separate occasions in October 1988.

[121](#) *Yunxiao tingzhi*, 16: 9b (p. 606).

5 • • • The Tiandihui in Myth and Legend

[1](#) All seven versions, from earliest to latest, are translated in Appendix B.

[2](#) For the full text of the Yao Dagao register, see *TDH*, 1: 3—30.

[3](#) Parts of the Yang family register have recently been published in Qin Baoqi, [192].

[4](#) Luo Ergang, [163], pp. 1—3 (*TDH*, 1: 33—35).

[5](#) Luo Ergang, [163], pp. 41—43.

[6](#) Xiao Yishan, [292], 2: 1b—7b (*TDH*, 1: 39—47).

[7](#) Scholars today generally agree that the Gui County and Shouxian manuscripts predate the manuscripts discovered by Xiao Yishan on the grounds that their contents are simpler and less elaborate. Also, according to research conducted by Luo Ergang, the high point of the Tiandihui in Gui county would have coincided with the activity of Chen Kai early in the Xianfeng era (personal communication, Qin Baoqi, Oct. 1989).

[8](#) Hirayama Shū, [88], pp. 112—18.

[9](#) Zhang Jianqiu's name might be a misprint or an alteration of "Zhang Lianqiu," the villain of the Shouxian Manuscript (or vice versa; see *TDH*, 1: 36, 43).

[10](#) There is a Dapu county in Guangdong, but the name in the manuscript is written with different characters.

[11](#) In the Hirayama version, these five men appear, not as the Tiger Generals, but as soldiers who allow the priests to escape by falsely reporting their deaths.

[12](#) There is much similarity in place-names in the Gui County and Shouxian manuscripts, and one even wonders whether the Hongzhusi and the Yuzhushi are one and the same. In any case, there appears to be no real temple of either name. So far as is known, the Dragon Tiger Mountain is fictive as well.

[13](#) The Narration speaks of the Dapu convent (Dapuan). In this case, have the characters "da" and "xia" been interchanged or mistaken for each other?

[14](#) Or changed yellow and black clouds into two roads? The text is unclear. The *shen* ("spirits" or "deities") Zhu Kai and Zhu Guang are creations of the legend's authors. Their names are rendered variously in the copybooks as Zhu Jiang, Zhu Guang, and Zhu Hong, reflecting dialectical differences in pronunciation (personal communication, Qin Baoqi, Oct. 1989).

[15](#) For an account of the Chongzhen reign, see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 1: 87—156.

[16](#) Qing authorities were also eager to identify Zhu Hongzhu as soon as they heard the name. It first cropped up, so far as we know, in connection with the case of Qiu Daqin of Guangdong, who founded a society in 1800. In the oath book (*mengshu*) Qiu had received from He Qichang, He mentioned having run into Zhu Hongzhu at the Shaolin temple in Henan (*TDH*, 6: 420, memorial of Wang Zhiyi, gov. of Fujian, JQ 5/7/26). The name came up again a few years later, when Du Shiming was found to have been circulating the story of a 32-year-old scion of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Hongzhu, in his efforts to mobilize residents of the Fujian-Jiangxi border regions for an uprising in 1805—6 (*TDH*, 6: 282, memorial of Xian Feng, gov. of

Jiangxi, JQ 11/8/4). In both instances, searches were launched for the elusive Zhu, but no traces could be found (*TDH*, 6: 290—95, memorial of A Linbao, gov.-gen. of Fujian, JQ 11/12/17).

[17](#) Personal communication, Qin Baoqi, 1992; Sangren, p. 211. According to Sangren, Kai-Zhang shengwang is one of the most popular territorial-cult deities among Taiwan's settlers from Zhangzhou. Nearly every temple boasts stories of his divine intervention to protect the community from natural disasters, attacks by aborigines, or other threats from the outside. For other references to Kai-Zhang shengwang, see Sangren, pp. 65, 68, 73, 77, 78, 99, 100, 157, 212.

[18](#) Personal communication, Qin Baoqi, Oct. 1989.

[19](#) Ibid.

[20](#) Chesneaux, [30], pp. 4—5. According to Chesneaux, the great peasant rebellions of the mid-nineteenth century were “inspired by the *Shui-hu* in their political vocabulary and their system of titles.” The Nian, for example, referred to one of their leaders as the Shun-Tian wang (“King who obeys Heaven”), and the Taiping leaders, especially Shi Dakai, conceived of their mission in terms of the moral and socio-political values manifested in the novel.

[21](#) W. Fuchs, *Beiträge zu mandjurischen Bibliographie und Literatur*, p. 247, as quoted in Chesneaux, [30], p. 3. Government authorities too were conscious of the *Shuihuzhuan*'s potential influence on subversive groups. As early as 1653, some officials expressed their opposition to its translation into Manchu, and this was duly banned after 1753. Chinese versions were ultimately banned also, in 1774 and 1808, with the prohibition being officially incorporated in the Jiaqing code. In 1851, the book was banned in all forms (*ibid.*, p. 2).

[22](#) Ibid., p. 8.

[23](#) Ibid., p. 3. It is interesting to note, also, that most versions have 107 people joining the youthful Zhu Hongzhu in rebellion, for a total of 108 participants, a number that was almost certainly inspired by the 108 “brigands” in Song Jiang's band.

[24](#) Ibid., p. 10, translation from chap. 120 of *Water Margin*; Yao Dagao version of the legend.

[25](#) Ruhlmann, p. 169.

[26](#) Ibid., pp. 169—70.

[27](#) Chesneaux, [30], p. 15. Chaps. 55, 64, and 87 feature the actions of Huyan Zhuo; see Shapiro, vol. 2.

[28](#) Chesneaux, [30], p. 12. For more on the antics of Lu Da, see Shapiro, 1: chaps. 3—8.

[29](#) Chesneaux, [30], pp. 17,19.

[30](#) Ibid., p. 20.

[31](#) Ibid., p. 19.

[32](#) Muramatsu, pp. 241—42.

[33](#) For more information, see ter Haar, [78], pp. 15—116, 22—31. On Ma Chaozhu, pp. 41—50.

[34](#) Qin Baoqi, [194], p. 95.

[35](#) Muramatsu, p. 240.

[36](#) Ibid., p. 252.

Conclusion

[1](#) One such study has already been undertaken by David Ownby, of Southern Methodist University, who is examining how the Tiandihui made its way into the settled society before the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion and

how young men who were at least marginally connected to village institutions brought the society and its form of parasitic violence into their communities (Ownby, [1851, work in progress]).

[2](#) Welcome insight into the processes of this interaction will be provided in a forthcoming work by Robert Antony, of Western Kentucky University, who is studying crime and law in South China (Antony, [1]).

[3](#) See ter Haar, [78]. One of ter Haar's major points in this essay is that messianic traditions were the most important sources for the rituals and mythology of the Tiandihui.

Character List

For the names of authors discussed in Chapter 4, see the Tiandihui Bibliography, PP. 303—32.

Amili Village	阿密里
bai	拜
Bai jiaolong	白蛟龍
bai Ti Xi weishi	拜提喜為師
Baigoutong	白苟壩
Baihedong	白鶴洞
Baihelin	白鶴林
baihui	拜會
Baikoudong	白口洞
Bailianhui	白蓮會
Baimanghua	白茫花
Baiquan (village)	白泉(村)
Baisha wankou	白沙灣口
baishen jiemeng	拜神結盟
Baixianghui	拜香會
Baizihui	百子會
Banshan	半山
bao	包
baojia	保甲
Baojiahui	保家會
Baozhu	寶珠
Baozhuyuan	寶珠院
ben zi	本子
bendi	本地
Bi Yongnian	畢永年

biaowen	表文
bingyin	丙寅
boxue	博學
Cai Buyun	蔡步雲
Cai Demai	蔡德買
Cai Deming	蔡德明
Cai Dezhong	蔡德忠
Cai Fu	蔡福
Cai Lu	蔡祿
Cai Minglang	蔡明郎
Cai Wuqiang	蔡烏強
Cai Yatang	蔡亞堂
Cai Yin	蔡蔭
Cangbiangang	倉邊港
Cao Huailin	曹懷林
Cenjie (Rock)	岑街(石)
Chang (pavilion)	長(亭)
Changfang	長房
changlao	長老
Changlin (monastery)	長林(寺)
changsha hankou	長沙漢口
Changtian (village)	長田(村)
chaoben	抄本
Chelunpu	車輪埔
Chen (society recruiter)	陳
Chen Agao	陳阿高
Chen Bang	陳邦
Chen Biao	陳彪
Chen Dong	陳棟
Chen Guangyuan	陳光爰

Chen Guannu	陳觀奴
Chen Hong	陳宏
Chen Hui	陳輝
Chen Jichuan	陳紀傳
Chen Jinnan	陳近南
Chen Kai	陳開
Chen Lanjisi	陳爛屐四
Chen Lao'er	陳老二
Chen Laojiu	陳老九
Chen Li	陳禮
Chen Li'nán	陳禮南
Chen Pi	陳丕
Chen Piaoxue	陳飄雪
Chen Qiao	陳樵
Chen Qu	陳軸
Chen Shangyuan	陳上元
Chen Shaobai	陳少白
Chen Shujin	陳淑金
Chen Sulao	陳蘇老
Chen Wen Yao	陳文耀
Chen Yaben	陳亞本
Chen Yonghua	陳永華
Chen Yuanguang	陳元光
Chen Xin	陳信
Chen Zhouquan	陳周全
Chen Zhuo	陳卓
Chendaizhen	陳岱鎮
chengge hudi	稱哥呼弟
chi	尺
Chongzhen	崇禎
chuanhui	傳會

chuanjiao	傳教
Chui Lao'er	鍾老二
Ci Guang	慈光
Cong junling Zhu	從軍令朱洪廣記
Hongguang ji	
cun	寸
da chengguo	大成國
Da Gong	大公
da jiangjun	大蔣軍
Da mengzhu Zhu	大盟主朱
Da Ming	大明
<i>Da-Qinglü xinli</i>	大清律新例
da toumu	大頭目
Da wang	大王
da ye	大爺
Da yuanshuai	大元帥
Da Zong (Gong)	大宗(公)
Da Zong shen	大宗神
da zongguan	大總管
dage	大哥
Dalikou	大力口
Daliyi	大里杙
Daluo Shenxian	大羅神仙
Damo (Buddha)	達摩
Danzhan Qingchao	單斬清朝反骨人
fan guren	
Danzhu	丹竹
dao	道
Dao Zong	道宗
Daofang	道芳
Dapu (fictional)	大浦(縣)

county)	
Dapu (county, Guangdong)	大埔(縣)
Dapu (an) (Dapu monastery)	大普(庵)
Dawu	大吳
dazu	大族
Dazun (deity)	達尊(神)
Deng Chang	鄧昌
Deng Desheng	鄧德勝
Deng Enyue	鄧恩岳
Deng Fangbu	鄧方布
Deng Sheng	鄧勝
Dengji shu xiuqian mibu	登記東修錢米簿
diansi junshi	典司軍師
diji minpin	地瘠民貧
Ding (mountain)	丁(山)
Dingfang	頂方
Dingzaixia	丁仔峽
Donghai Bo	東海伯
<i>Donghua lu</i>	東華錄
Donglan	東蘭
Dongli (village)	東歷(村)
Dongshanling	東山嶺
Dongxia	東廈
dou	斗
Du Fang	杜方
Du Long	杜龍
Du Shiming	杜世明
Duxun	杜濬

E Hui	鄂輝
Enbenjing	恩本經
Fahua (monastery)	法華
Fan Qi	范七
fang (family, branch)	房
Fang Dahong	方大洪
Fang Huang	方黃
Fang Huicheng	方惠成
Fang Kaishan	方開山
Fang-Qing fu-Ming	反清復明
Fang Quan	方勸
fei	匪
fen	分
Feng Laosan	封老三
Fenghua(ting)	風花亭
Fengshan	風山
Fenji(hu)	黃箕(湖)
fenxiang(huo)	分香(火)
Fenzhou	分州
Fozu	佛祖
Fu Laohong	符老洪
fu-Ming	復明
Fu-Ming jue-Qing	復明絕清
Fu-Ming jue-Qing,	復明絕清登龍位
deng longwei	
Fu-Ming qu-Qing	復明去清
Fu-Ming wanxing	復明萬姓一本合
yiben, hegui Hongzong; tongna shanhe gongxiang sheji, yichao jiuji wangu mingyang	歸洪宗同拿山河 共享社稷一朝場 集萬古名揚
fu yuanshuai	副元帥
fu zhongxing wan hehe	福忠興萬合和
Fuhua (mountain)	伏華(山)

Fukang'an	福康安
Fumuhui	父母會
Fupu (county)	扶婆(縣)
Fuxing (place)	福興
fuxing (revive)	復興
fuxing Tiandihui	復興天地會
Gan Hui	甘輝
Gao Qizhuo	高其倬
Gao Shanpo	高山坡
Gaokeng'an	高坑庵
Gaoxi	高溪
Gaoxi Township	高溪鄉
Gaoxilou	高溪樓
Gaoximiao	高溪廟
Gelaohui	哥老會
gonghong hehe	共洪和合
gonghou	公候
gongsheng	貢生
gu	股
Gu Yanwu	顧炎武
Gu Zhisheng	古致昇
Guan Yu	關羽
Guan Yuelong	官粵隴
Guandi	關帝
<i>Guang yang zaji</i>	廣陽雜記
Guangfu gonghui	光復公會
guanxi	關係
Guanyehui	關爺會
Guanyin(ting)	觀音(亭)
Gui (county)	貴
Guiyang	桂陽

Gulang	鼓浪
Guo Tinghui	郭廷輝
Guo Xiuying	郭秀英
Guo Xuan	郭選
Guo Yi	郭義
guohao	國號
Guoluohui	囑嚮會
hai fang ting yamen	海方斤衙門
hai shi lian Tian	海石連天
haijin	海禁
Haishan (monastery)	海山(寺)
Hankou	漢口
hao	號
he	和
He Kai	何開
He Man	和滿
He Qichang	何其昌
He Shen	和珅
He Ti	何體
He Youzhi	何有志
He Zhe	何哲
He Zhoude	何周德
hehetong	合和通
hei (black)	黑
hetong	合同
Heyihui	和義會
Hong	洪
Hong Daquan	洪大全
Hong Dasui	洪大歲
Hong Er	洪二
Hong Erheshang	洪二和尚

Hong Qisheng	洪敏勝
Hong Taisui	洪太歲
Hong Xiuquan	洪秀全
Hong Ying	洪英
Honghua(ting)	紅花(亭)
(Hirayama version)	
Honghua(ting)	洪花(亭)
(Preface version	
of Xi Lu Legend)	
Honglian shenghui	洪蓮勝會
(Vast Lotus	
Victory Society)	
Honglianhui (Vast	洪蓮會
Lotus Society)	
hongluo	紅羅
Hongmen	洪門
Hongmen xiaoyin	洪門小引
Hongqianhui (Red	紅錢會
Coin Society)	
Hongqianhui (Vast	洪錢會
Money Society)	
Hongwu	洪武
Hongzhu(si)	洪珠(寺)
Hou Erbaxiong	候二八雄
Hou Mai	候邁
Hou-Tang Tianzi	后唐天子轉世
zhuanshi	
Hou Xiangxing	候祥興
Houfeizhuan	后妃傳
Houxi	后溪
hu (lake)	胡
Hu Dedi	胡德帝

Hu Deqi	胡得起
hu gou	胡狗
Hu Junhong	胡俊鴻
Hu Yishu	胡義書
Hua wai	華外
Huang Biao	黃標
Huang Changcheng	黃昌成
Huang Chengsi	黃丞思
Huang Delong	黃得龍
Huang Huaceng	黃華曾
Huang Huazeng	黃華增
Huang Jiaojing	黃焦敬
Huang Kaiji	黃開基
Huang Qing	黃清
Huang Rigui	黃日貴
Huang Shi	黃石
Huang Shike	黃世可
Huang Sunnu	黃孫奴
Huang Xing	黃興
Huang Yacheng	黃亞程
Huang Zhongquan	黃忠泉
Huangdun	黃敦
Huangfeng	黃峰
Huangquan (village)	黃泉(村)
Huangtang	黃塘
huatie	花帖
huaya	花押
Huo	火
Huotian	火田
hui	會
huibu	會簿
huidang	會黨

huifei	會匪
huifu Mingzuo	恢復明祚
huiguan	會館
huishou	會首
huishu	會書
huizu	會族
Huyan Zhuo	呼延灼
Ji Qiguang	季麒光
Ji Qing	吉慶
jia (family)	家
Jia hou ri shan	家後日山
Jian Xingfu	簡興富
Jian'an bo	建安伯
Jiang Bizai	江婢仔
Jiang Huakai	蔣華開
Jiang Junzhang	將君章
Jiang Wenxing	江文興
Jiang Yanu	江啞奴
Jianghu chuanzihui	江湖串子會
Jianghutuan	江湖團
jiangjun	將軍
jiao	教
Jiao Liang	焦(僑)亮
Jiaochu tanguan	剷除貪官
jiaomen	教門
jiawu	甲午
jiayin	甲寅
jiebai	結拜
jiebai xiongdi (or	結拜兄弟
jiebai dixiong)	(結拜弟兄)
jiemeng weifei	結盟為匪
jieshe baimeng	結社拜盟

jieyi	結義
Jin	金
Jin Qin	金秦
Jindanjiao	金丹教
Jiuhuata	九話塔
Jiulian	九蓮
junshi	軍師
juren	舉人
jushi	舉事
Kai-Zhang sheng-wang	開漳聖王
Kaikou buliben;	開口不離本
chushou bulisan	出手不離三*
Kang Youwei	康有為
Ke Shangyuan	柯尚元
Lai Abian	賴阿邊
Lai A'en	賴阿恩
Lai Ali	賴阿立
Lai Dazhong	賴達忠
Lai Dongbao	賴東保
Lai Niangru	賴娘如
Lan Jiansheng (Student by Purchase)	藍監生
Lan Juren (Provincial Graduate)	藍舉人
Lao Cao	老曹
Lao da wang	老大王
laoguan	老官
Laorenhui	老人會
laoshi	老師
Leigonghui	雷公會
li	里
Li (Courtesy)	禮
Li Amin	李阿閔

Li Bugao	李步高
Li Cai	李彩
Li Dalu	李大祿
Li Daozhu	李道著
Li Faguang	李發廣
Li Gui	李桂
Li Hansheng	李漢升
Li Hongzhang	李鴻章
Li Jiangsi	李江泗
Li Jin	李進
Li Jinglu	李京祿
Li Kaihua	李開花
Li Kui	李魁
Li Kuisheng	李魁升
Li Laowu	李老五
Li Lingkui	李凌魁
*In some versions 舉 (<i>ju</i>) or 起 (<i>qi</i>) is written instead of 出 (<i>chu</i>).	
Li Qitian	李奇天
Li Sekai	李色開
Li Shaomin	李少敏
Li Shen(fei)	李伸(妃)
Li Shidi	李識弟
Li Shikai	李式開
Li Shiyao	李待堯
Li Shiyu	李世瑜
Li Shui	李水
Li Tonggu	李桐姑
Li Wenli	李文力
Li Xianya	李先遂
Li Xinyan	李新燕
Li Yaozi	李鵲子
Li Yonghuai	李泳懷

Li Yu'en	李遇恩
Li Yugao	李于高
Li Zhai	李摘
Li Zhong	李中
Li Zicheng	李自成
Li Zirong	李紫榮
liang	兩
Liang Abu	梁阿步
Liang Dayou	梁大有
Liang Laojiu	梁老九
Liang Laosan	梁老三
Liang Qichao	梁啟超
Liangshanpo	梁山泊
Liao Ganzhou	廖干周
Liao Pu	廖浦
Liao Qing	廖磬
Liao Shanqing	廖善慶
Liao Yuesi	廖月似
Liao Yuzhang	寥玉章
Lin Ajun	林阿俊
Lin Azhen	林阿真
Lin Chongsan	林崇 三
Lin Dagang	林大綱
Lin Dahong	林大洪
Lin Dajiang	林大江
Lin Gongyu	林功裕
Lin Guoxiang	林綱祥
Lin Han	林漢
Lin Hewu	林鶴鳴
Lin Hou	林厚
Lin Ling	林領
Lin Long	林龍

Lin Pan	林泮
Lin Qiongyan	林瓊宴
Lin Runcai	林閏才
Lin Sanchang	林三長
Lin Shuangwen	林爽文
Lin Shuifan	林水返
Lin Tianshen	林添申
Lin Tongge	林同哥
Lin Xian	林咸
Lin Xingzhu	林興珠
Lin Yong	林勇
Lin Yongchao	林永超
Lin Yongzhao	林永昭
Lin Yu	林裕
Lin Zhongyu	林中玉
ling	令
Ling Chengrong	凌成榮
Lingwang (temple)	靈王(廟)
Lingzhu wang	靈著王
liu (banishment)	流
Liu Bei	劉備
Liu Bowen (or Liu Baiwen)	劉伯溫
Liu Changsheng	劉長生
Liu Donggui	劉東貴
Liu Ji	劉基
Liu Jing	劉景
Liu Lao'er	劉老二
Liu Laojiu	劉老九
Liu Meizhan	劉梅占
Liu Que	劉却
Liujiawei	劉家圍
Longhu(shan)	龍虎(山)

Longhuahui	龍華會
Longjiao	龍交
longren	寵任
Longwu	隆武
lu	路
Lu (village)	盧
Lu Da	魯達
Lu Mao	盧茂
Lu San	盧三
Lu Shenghai	盧盛海
Luo Dagang	羅大綱
Luo Han	羅漢
Luo Xianglin	羅香林
Luo Shangshu	駱上書
Luocha	羅刹
Luofu (mountain)	羅浮(山)
luohanjiao	羅漢腳
Luojiao	羅教
Luzai	鹿仔(港)
Ma Chaowen	馬朝文
Ma Chaoxing	馬朝興
Ma Chaozhu	馬朝桂
Ma Erfu	馬二福
Ma Fuyi	馬福益
Ma Jiulong	馬九龍
Ma Ninger	馬寧兒
Ma Shaotang	馬紹湯
Ma Yifu	馬儀福
Magang	馬港
Makeng (temple)	馬坑(廟)
Mai Qing	麥青
Man-Han	滿漢

Matang	麻塘
Maxi (temple)	馬溪(廟)
Meitianshe	眉田社
men-t'u (mentu)	門徒
meng	盟
mengshu	盟書
mengzhu	盟主
miaozhu	廟主
midou	米斗
Mie-Qing	滅清
Milefo jiangsheng,	彌勒佛降生保扶
baofu Niuba	牛八
Milefo zhuanshi	彌勒佛轉世
mimi shehui	秘密社會
mimi xiehui	秘密協會
Mingdenghui	明燈會
miyue	密約
mou-p'an wei-hsing (moupan weixing)	謀叛未行
mu (measure)	畝
mu (wood, tree)	木
mu-li-dou-shi	木立斗世
mu-li-dou-shi	木立斗世知天下;
zhi Tianxia;	順天興明
hun-Tian xing- Ming	
mucheng	木城
Muyang (city)	木楊(城)
Nanpo	南陂
Naqian	那錢
Nayancheng	那彥成
nian	廿
Ning Jin'ao	寧金鰲
Ning Zhongcai	寧中才

Niutouhui	牛頭會
nongmin qiyi	農民起義
Ou Lang	歐狼
Ou Pinzhong	獸品重
Pai-Man zongzhi	排滿宗旨
Paiwai zongzhi	排外宗旨
Pan Jishun	潘季馴
Pan Laocai	潘老草
Pan Qihui	潘其輝
Peng Chun	彭春
Peng Longtian	彭龍天
pengmin	棚民
pianqian	騙錢
pian-ch'ü (bianqu)	邊區
Pingding Luocho	平定羅利方略
fanglüe	
Pingshan	平山
pingtou baixing	平頭百姓
Pingtouhui	平頭會
Pulong county	圖龍(縣)
qi (air)	氣
qian	錢
Qian Hong Da Sui	千洪大歲
Qin Ming	秦明
Qinding pingding	欽定平定台灣紀
Taiwan jilüe	略
Qing	清
Qing Bang	青幫
qingfeng	清風
Qingheihui	靛藍會
qingshen	清神
Qingshigao	清史稿

Qingxi	清溪
Qiu Daqin	仇大欽
* Sometimes is written as	
Qiu Kuo	邱瀾
Qiu Wa	邱哇
Qiu Zongyuan	邱宗源*
quanfeng fushu	拳奉符書
Rao Niegou	饒藏狗
Ren (benevolence)	仁
ren (stem/branch)	壬
Ren Wenbing	任文炳
Renshan	稔山
Renyi sanxianhui	仁義三仙會
Renyi shuangdaohui	仁義雙刀會
Renyihui	仁義會
Ri Shan	日山
Ri Shan wei ji	日山為記
ri yue che ma san	日月車馬三
qian li	千里
ri yue qing feng ling	日月清風令
Ruan He	阮何
Ruan Yuan	阮元
sanba nianyi	三八廿一
Sanbai ershiyi	三百二十一
Sanchahe	三汊河
Sandianhui	三點會
Sanhe (army)	三合(軍)
sanhe heshui chu	三合河水出高溪,
Gaoxi, Yangchun	陽春廟裡有詩題,
miaoli you shiti,	你今吃了三合水,
nijin chile Sanhenijin chile Sanheshui, baoyou wuzhu zao dengji	保佑吾主早登基,
Sanhehui	三合會

Sanheshui	三合水
Sanxing jie-Wan Li	三姓結萬李桃紅
Tao Hong; Jiulong sheng-Tian Li Zhu Hong	九龍生天李朱洪
Sanyuanli	三元里
shan	善
Shangrao	上饒
Shao Yong	邵雍
Shaolin	少林
Shawankou	沙灣口
shaxue huimeng	歃血會盟
shaxue mengshi	歃血盟誓
shen	申
Shen Runzhong	沈潤中
Shen Weibin	沈渭濱
shengyuan	生員
shenminghui	神明會
shi (oath)	誓
shi (teacher)	師
shi (1st character for Buddha)	釋
Shi Dakai	石達開
Shi Eryuan	施爾遠
Shican Cliff	石礫(崖)
shichang	市場
Shi'erfeng	十二峰
shifu	師傅
Shijiweixi	石礫尾溪
shizun	師尊
shoufu	守府
Shouxian	守先
shu yang gong ji	豎仰攻濟
shuai	帥
shuaiyin	帥印

Shuangdaohui	雙刀會
Shui	水
Shuihuzhuan	水滸傳
Shuikou	水口
shuili laide	水裡來的
Shun-Tian	順天
Shun-Tian dangshi	順天當時
Shun-Tian jiangjun	順天將軍
Shun-Tian wang	順天王
Shun-Tian xingdao	順天行道
Shun-Tian xingdao hehetong	順天行道合和同
Shun-Tian zihao	順天字號
Shunguo yuanfen	順國源分
Siming	四明
Song	宋
Song Jiang	宋江
Song Qing	宋清
Su Dahong	蘇大洪
Su Feng	蘇俸
Su Hong	蘇洪
Su Hongguang	蘇洪光
Su Hongyuan	蘇洪元
Su Xianming	蘇顯名
Su Ye	蘇葉
Su Zhisong	蘇枝嵩
Sun Quanmou	孫全謀
Sun Shiyi	孫士一
Ta-lan-shan (Dalan shan)	大嵐山
Taichang	太倉
Taiping (zhai)	太平(寨)
Taishang laojun	太上老君
Taisui (temple)	太歲(廟)

Taizi	太子
Taizong (Tang emperor)	唐太宗
tang	堂
Tang Mingsan	唐明三
Tang Tianzi	唐天子
Tang Wan	湯完
Tang Zhi'e	唐之莪
Tao Bida	桃必達
<i>Tao-li-jian xu</i>	桃李劍叙
Tao Yuan	桃元
Taoyuange	桃園歌
Tasi huren erbaqiu	踏死胡人二八秋
tengpaibing	藤牌兵
ti-Tian xingdao	替天行道
Ti Xi	提喜
Tian You	天佑
Tian Youhong	天佑洪
Tiande wang	天德王
Tiandihui (Heaven and Earth Society)	天地會
Tiandihui (Increase Brothers Society)	添弟會
Tiantai	天台
Tianting guoshi	天庭國式
Tianxia zhishi Qing gaijue	天下知世清該絕
Tianyun	天運
Tianyun xinyou (nian)	天運辛酉(年)
Tianyun yichou	天運乙丑
Tianyu yimao	天運乙卯
Tianzizhang	天字嶂
tiben	題本
tidubing	提督兵
Tie Bi	鐵鼻

Tiebianhui	鐵鞭會
Tiechihui	鐵尺會
Tielongzhang	鐵龍嶂
T'ien-mu-shan (Tianmu shan)	
Tongguan	潼關
tongjiao	同教
Tongmenghui	同盟會
tongshilang	通侍郎
toumu	頭目
Tu	土
Tu Xi	涂喜
tuan	團
tuanlian	團練
Tuguawei	土瓜圩
Wan	萬
Wan (Monk)	萬(和尚)
Wan Da	萬大
Wan Er	萬二
Wan Gong	萬公
Wan Guo	萬郭
Wan Li	萬里
Wan Lu	萬祿
Wan Qi	萬七
Wan Tiqu	萬提起
Wan Wu	萬五
Wan Yi	萬義
Wan Yunlong	萬雲龍
Wandai (Marquis)	萬代(公侯)
Wang Chui	王垂
Wang Dingzhen	王定珍
Wang Guang	王光
Wang Shichong	王世充

Wang Tengjiao	王騰蛟
Wang Tianzu	王添祖
Wang Xiyuan	王熙元
Wang Yuanhong	汪元洪
Wang Zhiyi	汪志亦
Wangquan	王泉
Wanhu (Marquis)	萬戶(候)
Wanli hetong Ming zaixing	萬里合同明在興
Wannianta	萬年塔
Wanyun	萬雲
wen	文
Wen Dengyuan	溫登元
wen ting guo shi	文廷國式
Wen Yali	溫亞利
wokou	倭寇
Wu Qiu	吳球
Wu Sangui	吳三桂
Wu Sha	吳紗
Wu Tao	吳韜
Wu Tiancheng	吳天成
Wu Tianyou	吳天佑
Wu Tingfen	吳廷慎
Wu Tinggui	吳廷貴
Wu Tonghui	吳通會
Wu Wenchun	吳文春
Wu Xianya	吳仙迓
Wu Yizuo	吳以作
Wu Yu	吳玉
Wu Yun	吳孕
Wu Zixiang	吳子祥
Wu Zuotian	吳左天
Wuchao	左朝

wudian ershiyi	五點二十一
Wudun	五墩(村)
wufang	五房
Wufeng (mountain)	五鳳(山)
Wula'na	伍拉納
Wulong(gang)	烏龍(崗)
Wumen	午門
Wunitang	烏泥塘
Wusheng laomu	無生老母
Wushi(keng)	烏石(坑)
Wushi Er	烏石二
Wuyi shan (Bohea Hills)	武夷山
wuzu	五祖
wuzu zhiwei	五祖之位
Xi Lu (legend)	西魯
Xi Lu Xu	西魯序
Xi Lu Xu Shi	西魯敘事
Xi Luo	西羅
Xiaceng (village)	下曾(村)
Xiagangjie	下港街
Xiagangwei	下港尾
Xialingwei	下峇尾
xian (county)	縣
xianfeng	先鋒
Xianfengyan	仙峰岩
Xianggang	祥岡
xianglu	香爐
xiangyong	鄉勇
xiangzhu	香主
xiansheng	先生
Xianxia (pass)	仙霞(關)
Xiaodaohui	小刀會

Xiaokengzai	小坑仔
Xiaoxi	小溪
xiaozhu	小主
Xiapu(an)	下普(庵)
Xidi	溪底
Xie Bangheng	謝邦恒
Xie Guoxun	謝國勛
Xie Jinluan	謝金鑾
Xie Luoli	謝羅俚
Xie Naigui	謝奶桂
Xie Sifeng	謝嗣封
Xie Zhi	謝志
xiedou	械鬪
Xin	信
Xindian (township)	新店
Xing-Han mie-Man	興漢滅滿
xing-Ming jue-Qing	興明絕清
Xing Yi	行義
Xingzhonghui	興中會
Xinhai geming	辛亥革命
xinyou (year)	辛酉
Xiong Mao	熊毛
Xiushen	修身
Xiya (village)	溪雅(村)
Xu Axie	許阿協
Xujishe	徐繼畲
Xu Nangerig	許南耕
Xu Pei (Monk)	續培(和尚)
Xu San	徐三
Xu Siceng	徐嗣曾
Xu Songgu	許松姑
Xu Yan	徐炎

Xu Yugui	徐玉貴
Ya Qi	亞七
Yakesa	雅克薩
Yan Chao	顏超
Yan Guiqiu	嚴貴邱
Yan Guo	嚴國
Yan Laosan	嚴老三
Yan Laowu	嚴老五
Yan Peiyu	嚴佩玉
Yan Ruohai	嚴若海
Yan Tuo	嚴陀
Yan Yagui	顏亞貴
Yan Yan	嚴烟
Yang Changju	楊昌舉
Yang Changzuo	楊杖佐
Yang Guangfu	楊光福
Yang Guangxun	楊光勛
Yang Hantou	楊憨頭
Yang Jinlang	楊金郎
Yang Kerong	楊克榮
Yang Mashi	楊媽世
Yang Qilong	楊起隆
Yang Shengkui	楊勝葵
Yang Tongsheng	楊通盛
Yang Wenlin	楊文麟
Yang Wenna	楊文納
Yang Wenzuo	楊文左
Yang Xiuqi	楊秀敏
Yang Xuan	楊軒
Yang Yong	楊咏
Yang Zaijiang	楊再江
Yang Zhengbang	楊正榜

Yang Zhenguo	楊振國
Yangchun (temple)	陽春(廟)
Yangpanjiao	陽盤教
Yangshi (mountain)	羊屎(山)
Yanping (Prince)	延平
Yao Bida	姚必達
Yao Dagao	姚大羔
Yao Fa	姚發
Yao Ying	姚瑩
Yaofang (place)	姚坊
yaoping	腰憑
Ye Sheng	葉省
Ye Shihao	葉世豪
Yi	義
Yi Yangxian	伊仰先
Yijun	宜峻
Yimian buxiangshi;	一面不相識, 今日
jinri lai xiangfeng	來相逢
yimin	義民
yin	寅
Yin Zhiping	尹之屏
yingshe	影射
yinhui	銀會
Yinian (Monk)	一念(和尚)
Yinpanjiao	陰盤教
Yiqianhui	一錢會
yitian liangsanzhu	一田兩三主
Yiwang	義王
yixing	異姓
yong (mercenary)	勇
Yonghe	永和
Yongli	永歷

youmin	游民
Yu Mao	余貌
yuan	圓
yuanshuai	元帥
Yuanzhou	贛州
Yueshen (temple)	岳神(廟)
Yulian	玉蓮
Yunbai lian-Tian	雲白連天
Yunliao	雲寮
Yunxiao Tingzhi	雲霄聽志
Yuzhu (monastery)	玉珠(寺)
zeifei	賊匪
zeimu	賊目
Zeng Alan	曾阿蘭
Zeng Changhan	曾昌漢
Zeng Guofan	曾國藩
Zeng Qinghao	曾清浩
Zhan-Qing juebei jingui Ming	斬清絕北盡歸明
zhang	丈
Zhang Biao	張標
Zhang Bingling (Zhang Taiyan)	張炳麟(張太炎)
Zhang Changme	張長慶
Zhang Fei	張飛
Zhang Hongcun	張洪寸
Zhang Huangyan	張煌言
Zhang Jianqiu	張建秋
Zhang Jingzhao	張荀招
Zhang Jinqiu	張近秋
Zhang Junjin	張君錫
Zhang Junyu	張君玉
Zhang Li	張禮
Zhang Lianqiu	張連秋

Zhang Majiu	張媽求
Zhang Nan	張南
Zhang Nianer	張念二
Zhang Nianyi	張念一
Zhang Peichang	張配昌
Zhang Pi	張丕
Zhang Polian'gou	張破臉狗
Zhang Pu	張普
Zhang Si	張四
Zhang Taiyan	章太炎
Zhang Wen	張文
Zhang Xiaoyuan	張効元
Zhang Xingchuo	張姓綽
Zhang Yao	張要
Zhao Liangming	趙良明
Zhao Ling	趙麟
Zhao Mingde	趙明德
Zhao Song	趙宋
Zheng Cheng	鄭成
Zheng Chenggong	鄭成功
Zheng Daode	鄭道德
Zheng Daofang	鄭道芳
Zheng Guangcai	鄭光彩
Zheng Ji	鄭繼
Zheng Junda	鄭君達
Zheng Kai	鄭開
Zheng Liang	鄭朗
Zheng Shi	鄭詩
Zheng Sitao	鄭嗣韜
Zheng Wuzhu	鄭烏豬
Zheng Xingming	鄭興名
Zheng Yi (pirate)	鄭一

Zheng Yulan	鄭玉蘭
Zheng Zhilong	鄭芝龍
Zhi	智
Zhi Cao	志操
Zhigongtang	致公堂
Zhong Hezhao	鍾和超
Zhong Mingyang	鍾名揚
Zhong Tigang	鍾體剛
Zhong Xiang	鍾祥
Zhong Yamao	鍾亞茂
Zhongpuwei	中埔圍
Zhongyihui	忠義會
zhongyitang	忠義堂
zhou (district)	州
Zhou (mountain)	周(山)
Zhou Dabin	周達濱
Zhou Zongsheng	周宗勝
zhu	主
Zhu Biao	朱標
Zhu Dehui	朱德輝
Zhu Dingyuan	朱鼎元
Zhu Guang	朱光
Zhu Hongde	朱洪德
Zhu Hongguang ji	朱洪廣紀
Zhu Hongjin	朱洪錦
Zhu Hongying	朱洪英
Zhu Hongzhu	朱洪竹
Zhu Hongzu	朱洪祖
Zhu Jiang	朱江
Zhu Jiutao	朱九桃
Zhu Kai	朱開

Zhu Longyou	朱龍佑
Zhu Shicong	朱石崇
Zhu Turong	朱土榮
Zhu Yigui	朱一貴
Zhu Yuanzhang	朱元璋
Zhu Zhenxing	朱振興
Zhuangyan (Yan)	莊燿
Zhusan taizi	朱三太子
zi	字
zichou (year)	子丑
Zilonghui	子龍會
Ziwei sanguan	紫微三官
zong dage	總大哥
zongbing	總兵
zonghui	總會
zongzhen	總鎮
Zou Guanfeng	鄒觀鳳
Zou Siqiaoban	鄒四橋板

Bibliographies

Tiandihui Bibliography

This bibliography contains all the works we could find on the Tiandihui's history before the Opium War. Several are items that we found listed in Chinese bibliographies but were unable to locate. We include them on the chance that other researchers may find them someday; they are flagged with a [U] at the end of the entry.

Works that are not of direct relevance to the early Tiandihui are listed in the General Bibliography, pp. 333—38. The Tiandihui works are cited by bracketed numbers, the others by conventional short forms.

We use two abbreviations in this list: *HDSYJ*, for *Huidangshi yanjiu* (for full publishing data, see item [111], below); and *MJMM*, for the series *Minjian mimi jieshe yu zongjiao congshu* (Series on popular religion and secret societies) 民間秘密結社與宗教叢書, published in 1990 at Shijiazhuang by Hebei renmin chubanshe. We have routinely omitted the English translation and Chinese characters on collections and periodicals that appear in three or more entries:

Changliu (Free flowing) 暢流

Dalu zazhi (Continental magazine) 大陸雜誌

Guangming ribao (Guangming daily) 光明日報

Guangxi lishirenwuzhuan (Biographies of historical personages from Guangxi) 廣西歷史人物傳

Jiaoxue yu yanjiu (Teaching and research) 教學與研究

Jinian Xinhai geming qishi zhounian xueshu taolunhui lunwenji (Collected essays from the Symposium on the 70th Anniversary of the 1911 Revolution) 紀念辛亥革命七十周年學術討論會論文集

Lishi dang'an (Historical archives) 歷史檔案

Lishi jiaoxue (Teaching history) 歷史教學

Lishi yanjiu (Historical research) 歷史研究

Qingshi yanjiuji (Anthology of research on Qing history) 清史研究集

Shihuo yuekan (Shihuo monthly) 食貨月刊刊

Shixue yuekan (History monthly) monthly) 史學月刊

Taiwan fengwu (Taiwan scene) 臺灣風物

Taiwan wenxian (Taiwan archives and documents) 臺灣文獻

Wenhuibao (Wenhui daily) 文匯報

Zhongyang ribao (Zhongyang [Chungyang] daily) 中央日報

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This collection is largely composed of the palace and *lufu* memorials in the First Historical Archives but includes other important Tiandihui materials, such as the various versions of the Xi Lu Legend. The work is divided into four parts, as follows:

Part 1: The origin of the Tiandihui, vol. 1: 3—152

Part 2: The Lin Shuangwen rebellion, 1: 153—55: 360

Part 3: Tiandihui activities in the late Qianlong (1788—96), 5: 361—66: 72, divided into separate sections on uprisings or incidents as follows:

The uprising of Zhang Maqiu, 5: 363—74. 張媽求。

The uprising of Zhang Biao and Xie Zhi, 5: 375—403. 張標; 謝志。

The case of Liu Zhaokui of Xinjiang, 5: 404—23. 劉照魁。

The case of Huang Jiangzhu, 5: 424—49. 黃江珠。

The uprising of Su Ye and Chen Sulao, 5: 450—82. 蘇葉; 陳蘇老。

The uprising of Chen Guangyuan, 6: 1—10. 陳光爰。

The uprising of Chen Zhouquan, 6: 11—72. 陳周全。

Part 4: Tiandihui activities in the Jiaqing and Daoguang eras (to 1840), 6: 73—77: 540, divided by province as follows:

Taiwan, 6: 73—135

Fujian, 6: 136—243

Jiangxi, 6: 244—415

Guangdong, 6: 416—77: 158 (the vol. 7 section contains materials on the rebellion in Boluo and Yongan counties)

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[a](#) Yang Yong's testimony appears in *Tiandihui*, 1: 64.

[b](#) "The three surnames joined Wan; Li, Tao, and Hong. After Jiulong ascended to Heaven; Li, Zhu, and Hong." The possible meanings are discussed in Chapter One.

[c](#) From ancient times, one means of establishing blood relationships in paternity cases was to match the blood of the live person to the bones or bone marrow of the dead.

[d](#) Or Baiwen; Liu Bowen was an official of the early Ming dynasty whose name was associated with prophecy.

[e](#) According to Qin Baoqi, the first is a made-up character whose meaning and pronunciation are no longer known; the second is *shan*, "mountain."

[†]The Chinese text at this point is unclear. The phrase literally reads *hai shi lian-Tian, Changsha hankou*. The phrase *hai shi lian-Tian* may refer to a famous rock with the same inscription on Hainan Island, a place that the Chinese considered at the end of the world. Changsha and Hankou are cities in Hunan and Hubei provinces respectively. But in this context they may not be place-names at all, but references to a remote corner by the sea, in which case "changsha" could mean "long sand beach," and "hankou" could mean "river mouth."

[f](#) As Qin Baoqi points out, this version clearly says that the *Tiandihui* was created by Wan Ti Xi. None of the other versions even mention Wan Ti Xi, only Wan Yunlong or Da Zong, but from Yao Dagao's copybook and this one, we know that these are other names for Wan Ti Xi, and that he is the person referred to in the archives as Monk Hong Er, whose given name was Zheng Kai.

[g](#) On these dimensions, see the footnote to p. 211, below.

[h](#) Qing is here written without the top five strokes, which when read alone form the word "lord" or "master" (*zhu*).

[i](#) The founder or patriarch of the Chan or Zen sect of Buddhism, an Indian priest who brought sutras to China and was said to have sat facing a wall of the Shaolin monastery for nineteen years.

[j](#) Fenjiu is a real place, located not far from Gaoxi, in Fujian. One zhang, sometimes loosely translated as a yard, equaled 3.33 meters; a chi (loosely a foot), 0.33 meters; and a cun (loosely an inch), 0.33 decimeters.

[k](#) These are listed at the end of the document.

[l](#) Stanton translates this as "Heaven's manifestation to the country."

[m](#) Note that Li Sekai is identified as a horse-seller in the text. The list also departs from the text in the rendering of the names Hong Dasui, Hong Taisui, Li Shidi, and Li Sekai.

[n](#) The character for Qing is written without its head, in the secret manner of the era, while the character for Ming takes the form of the water radical plus *ri*, the character for day or sun; the "moon" portion of the character is absent.

[o](#) Compare the Preface version's "Vast Flower pagoda."

[p](#) The characters for these words form the component parts of the character for Hong.

[q](#) In Stanton's more elegant translation: "At parting, five a verse composed/which heroes carry undisclosed;/But when their brothers this do see,/they know the sign of unity" (p. 37). But again, we do not have the Chinese text he used.